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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
RICHARD GLOVER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

COLLATED WITH THE BEST EDITIONS:

BY

THOMAS PARK, F.S.A.

VOL. I.

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ENCOMIUMS ON GLOVER.

FROM THE SPLEEN.

BY MATTHEW GREEN.

THERE is a youth¹ that you can name,
Who needs no leading-strings to fame;
Whose quick maturity of brain
The birth of Pallas may explain :
Dreaming of whose depending fate,
I heard Melpomene debate,—
' This, this is he, that was foretold
Should emulate our Greeks of old :
Inspir'd by me, with sacred art,
He sings, and rules the varied heart;
If Jove's dread anger he rehearse,
We hear the thunder in his verse :
If he describes love turn'd to rage,
The furies riot in his page :
If he, fair liberty and law,
By ruffian power expiring draw,
The keener passions then engage
Aright, and sanctify their rage ;
If he attempts disastrous love,
We hear those plaints that wound the grove ;
Within the kinder passions glow,
And tears distill'd from pity flow.'

¹ The author of Leonidas.

QUERIES ANSWERED:

ON HEARING THE POEM OF LEONIDAS DISPRAISED.

BY DR. W——S, 1737.

WHY such reflections on this poem thrown?
All snarlers wish the Author's fame their own.
Why slept the great Leonidas so long?—
To wake immortal, by our Glover's song.
Why did nor Greece, nor Rome, this story tell?—
To show Great Britain could them both excel.

THE PREFACE.

To illustrate the following poem, to vindicate the subject from the censure of improbability, and to show, by the concurring evidence of the best historians, that such disinterested public virtue did once exist, I have thought it would not be improper to fix the subsequent narration.

While Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Persia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in Lacedæmon, both descended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately exposed by an uncertain rumour, which rendered his legitimacy suspected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceived a personal resentment against him: for Cleomenes, taking advantage of this report, persuaded the Spartans to examine into the birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was assisted in his perfidious designs by a near relation of Demaratus, named Leutyichides, who aspired to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the priestess of Delphi, who declared Demaratus not legitimate. Thus, by the base practices of his colleague Cleomenes, and of his kinsman Leutyichides, Demaratus was expelled

from his regal office in the commonwealth; a Lacedæmonian, distinguished in action and council, and the only king of Sparta, who, by obtaining the Olympic prize in the chariot-race, had increased the lustre of his country. He went into voluntary banishment, and, retiring to Asia, was there protected by Darius; while Leutychides succeeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the death of Cleomenes, Leonidas became king, who ruled in conjunction with this Leutychides when Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece. The number of land and naval forces which accompanied that monarch, together with the servants, women, and other usual attendants on the army of an eastern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions; as reported by Herodotus, who wrote within a few years after the event, and publicly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general assembly, not only from Greece itself, but from every part of the world wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he must certainly have been detected, and censured by some among so great a multitude; and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroyed that merit and authority which have procured to Herodotus the veneration of all posterity, with the appellation of 'the father of history.' On the first news of this attempt on their liberty, a convention, composed of deputies from the several states of Greece, was immediately held at the Isthmus of Corinth, to consult on proper measures for the public safety. The Spartans also sent messengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who

returned with an answer from the priestess of Apollo, that either a king, descended from Hercules, must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroyed. Leonidas immediately offered to sacrifice his life for the preservation of Lacedæmon; and, marching to Thermopylæ, possessed himself of that important pass with three hundred of his countrymen; who, with the forces of some other cities in the Peloponnesus, together with the Thebans, Thespians, and the troops of those states which adjoined to Thermopylæ, composed an army of near eight thousand men.

Xerxes was now advanced as far as Thessalia; when, hearing that a small body of Grecians was assembled at Thermopylæ, with some Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the rest Leonidas, a descendant of Hercules, he dispatched a single horseman before to observe their numbers, and discover their designs. When this horseman approached, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay concealed behind a rampart, formerly raised by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ on the side of Greece; so that his whole attention was engaged by those who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instant chanced to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonished the Persian. Some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises; others were combing their hair; and all discovered a total disregard of him, whom they suffered to depart, and report to Xerxes what he had seen; which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he sent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and required him to explain this strange

behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus informed him that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determined to fight to the last extremity. Xerxes, notwithstanding, in the confidence of his power, sent ambassadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them disperse, and become his friends and allies; which proposals being received with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Cissians to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attacked the Grecians, and were soon repulsed with great slaughter: fresh troops still succeeded, but with no better fortune than the first; being opposed to an enemy not only superior in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnished with better arms, both offensive and defensive.

Plutarch, in his Laconic apothegms, reports that the Persian king offered to invest Leonidas with the sovereignty of Greece, provided he would join his arms to those of Persia. This offer was too considerable a condescension to have been made before a trial of their force, and must therefore have been proposed by Xerxes after such a series of ill success as might probably have depressed the insolence of his temper; and it may be easily admitted that the virtue of Leonidas was proof against any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduced to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distress by a Malian, named Epialtes, who conducted twenty thousand

of the Persian army into Greece, through a pass which lay higher up the country, among the mountains of Œta: whereas the passage at Thermopylæ was situated on the sea-shore between those mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper pass had been committed to a thousand Phocians, who, upon the first sight of the enemy, inconsiderately abandoned their station, and put themselves in array upon a neighbouring eminence; but the Persians wisely avoided an engagement, and with the utmost expedition marched to Thermopylæ.

Leonidas no sooner received information that the Barbarians had passed the mountains, and would soon be in a situation to surround him, than he commanded the allies to retreat; reserving the three hundred Spartans and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they followed him with reluctance at first, he now compelled to stay. But the Thespians, whose number amounted to seven hundred, would not be persuaded by Leonidas to forsake him. Their commander was Demophilus; and the most eminent amongst them for his valour was Dithyrambus, the son of Harmatides. Among the Lacedæmonians the most conspicuous next to Leonidas was Dieneces, who, being told that the multitude of Persian arrows would obscure the sun, replied, 'the battle would then be in the shade.' Two brothers, named Alpheus and Maron, are also recorded for their valour, and were Lacedæmonians. Megistias, a priest, by birth an Acarnanian, and held in high honour at Sparta, refused to desert Leonidas, though entreated by him to consult his safety; but sent away his only

son, and remained himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians.

Herodotus relates that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadest part of Thermopylæ; where, being encompassed by the Persians, they fell with great numbers of their enemies: but Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and others, affirm, that the Grecians attacked the very camp of Xerxes in the night. Both these dispositions are reconcileable to probability. He might have made an attack on the Persian camp in the night, and in the morning have withdrawn his forces back to Thermopylæ, where they would be enabled to make the most obstinate resistance, and sell their lives upon the dearest terms. The action is thus described by Diodorus: 'The Grecians, having now rejected all thoughts of safety, preferring glory to life, unanimously called on their general to lead them against the Persians before they could be apprized that their friends had passed round the mountains. Leonidas embraced the occasion which the ready zeal of his soldiers afforded, and commanded them forthwith to dine, as men who were to sup in Elysium. Himself, in consequence of this command, took a repast, as the means to furnish strength for a long continuance, and to give perseverance in danger. After a short refreshment, the Grecians were now prepared, and received orders to assail the enemies in their camp, to put all they met to the sword, and force a passage to the royal pavilion; when, formed into one compact body, with Leonidas himself at their head, they marched against the Persians, and entered their camp at the dead of night. The

Barbarians, wholly unprepared, and blindly conjecturing that their friends were defeated, and themselves attacked by the united power of Greece, hurry together from their tents with the utmost disorder and consternation. Many were slain by Leonidas and his party, but much greater multitudes by their own troops, to whom, in the midst of this blind confusion, they were not distinguishable from enemies; for, as night took away the power of discerning truly, and the tumult was spread universally over the camp, a prodigious slaughter must naturally ensue. The want of command, of a watch-word, and of confidence in themselves, reduced the Persians to such a state of confusion, that they destroyed each other without distinction. Had Xerxes continued in the royal pavilion, the Grecians, without difficulty, might have brought the war to a speedy conclusion by his death; but he at the beginning of the tumult betook himself to flight with the utmost precipitation; when the Grecians, rushing into the tent, put to the sword most of those who were left behind; then, while night lasted, they ranged through the whole camp in diligent search of the tyrant. When morning appeared, the Persians, perceiving the true state of things, held the inconsiderable number of their enemies in contempt; yet were so terrified at their valour, that they avoided a near engagement; but, enclosing the Grecians on every side, showered their darts and arrows upon them at a distance, and in the end destroyed their whole body. In this manner fell the Grecians, who, under the conduct of Leonidas, defended the pass of Thermopylæ. All

must admire the virtue of these men, who with one consent, maintaining the post allotted by their country, cheerfully renounced their lives for the common safety of Greece, and esteemed a glorious death more eligible than to live with dishonour. Nor is the consternation of the Persians incredible. Who among those Barbarians could have conjectured such an event? Who could have expected that five hundred men would have dared to attack a million? Wherefore, shall not all posterity reflect on the virtue of these men, as the object of imitation, who, though the loss of their lives was the necessary consequence of their undertaking, were yet unconquered in their spirit; and among all the great names, delivered down to remembrance, are the only heroes who obtained more glory in their fall than others from the brightest victories? With justice may they be deemed the preservers of the Grecian liberty, even preferably to those who were conquerors in the battles fought afterwards with Xerxes; for the memory of that valour, exerted in the defence of Thermopylæ, for ever dejected the Barbarians, while the Greeks were fired with emulation to equal such a pitch of magnanimity. Upon the whole, there never were any before these who attained to immortality through the mere excess of virtue; whence the praise of their fortitude hath not been recorded by historians only, but hath been celebrated by numbers of poets; among others, by Simonides the lyric.'

Pausanias, in his *Laconics*, considers the defence of Thermopylæ by Leonidas as an action superior to any atchieved by his contemporaries,

and to all the exploits of preceding ages. 'Never (says he) had Xerxes beheld Greece, and laid in ashes the city of Athens, had not his forces under Hydarnes been conducted through a path over mount Cæta; and, by that means encompassing the Greeks, overcome and slain Leonidas.' Nor is it improbable that such a commander, at the head of such troops, should have maintained his post in so narrow a pass till the whole army of Xerxes had perished by famine. At the same time his navy had been miserably shattered by a storm, and worsted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artenisium.

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, so meritorious to their country, and so glorious to themselves, hath obtained such a high degree of veneration and applause from past ages, that few among the ancient compilers of history have been silent on this amazing instance of magnanimity, and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inscriptions now extant, some on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, still preserving their memory in every nation conversant with learning, and at this distance of time still rendering their virtue the object of admiration and of praise.

I shall now detain the reader no longer than to take this public occasion of expressing my sincere regard for the Lord Viscount Cobham, and the sense of my obligations for the early honour of his friendship. To him I inscribe the following poem; and herein I should be justified, independent of all personal motives, from his lordship's public conduct, so highly distinguished by his disinterest-

ed zeal and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life than in the field: to him therefore a poem, founded on a character eminent for military glory and love of liberty, is due from the nature of the subject.

R. GLOVER.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

VOL. I.

C

THE ARGUMENT.

Xerxes, king of Persia, having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and passed over the Hellespont into Thrace, with a design to conquer Greece; the deputies from the several states of that country, who had sometime before assembled themselves at the Isthmus of Corinth, to deliberate on proper measures for resisting the invader, were no sooner apprized of his march into Thrace, than they determined, without further delay, to dispute his passage at the straits of Thermopylæ, the most accessible part of Greece on the side of Thrace and Thessaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this resolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be assembled in expectation of receiving an answer from Apollo, to whom they had sent a messenger to consult about the event of the war. Leutychides, one of their two kings, counsels the people to advance no farther than the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates the Peloponnesus, where Lacedæmon was situated, from the rest of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, dissuades them from it. Agis, the messenger, who had been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle; which denounces ruin to the Lacedæmonians unless one of their kings lays down his life for the public. Leonidas offers himself for the victim. Three hundred more are appointed, all citizens of Sparta, and heads of families, to accompany and die with him at Thermopylæ. Alpheus returns to the Isthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen, departs from Lacedæmon. At the end of six days he encamps near the Isthmus, when he is joined by Alpheus; who describes the auxiliaries, then waiting at the Isthmus; those who are already possessed of Thermopylæ, as also the pass itself; and concludes with relating the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Persia.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

THE virtuous Spartan who resign'd his life
To save his country at the' Ætæan straits,
Thermopylæ, when all the peopled east
In arms with Xerxes fill'd the Grecian plains,
O Muse, record! The Hellespont they pass'd,
O'erpowering Thrace. The dreadful tidings swift
To Corinth flew. Her Isthmus was the seat
Of Grecian council. Alpheus thence returns
To Lacedæmon. In assembly full
He finds the Spartan people with their kings;
Their kings, who boast an origin divine,
From Hercules descended. They the sons
Of Lacedæmon had conven'd, to learn
The sacred mandates of the' immortal gods,
That morn expected from the Delphian dome.
But Alpheus sudden their attention drew,
And thus address'd them: ' For immediate war,
My countrymen, prepare. Barbarian tents
Already fill the trembling bounds of Thrace.
The Isthmian council hath decreed to guard
Thermopylæ, the Locrian gate of Greece.'

Here Alpheus paus'd. Leutychides, who shar'd
With great Leonidas the sway, uprose
And spake:—' Ye citizens of Sparta, hear!
Why from her bosom should Laconia send

Her valiant race to wage a distant war
Beyond the Isthmus? There the gods have plac'd
Our native barrier. In this favour'd land,
Which Pelops govern'd, us of Doric blood
That Isthmus inaccessible secures.

There let our standards rest. Your solid strength
If once you scatter, in defence of states
Remote and feeble, you betray your own,
And merit Jove's derision.'—With assent
The Spartans heard. Leonidas replied—

‘ Oh most ungenerous counsel! most unwise!
Shall we, confining to that Isthmian fence
Our efforts, leave beyond it every state
Disown'd, expos'd? Shall Athens, while her fleets
Unceasing watch the' innumerable foes,
And trust the' impending dangers of the field
To Sparta's well-known valour, shall she hear
That to Barbarian violence we leave
Her unprotected walls? Her hoary sires,
Her helpless matrons, and their infant race
To servitude and shame? Her guardian gods
Will yet preserve them. Neptune o'er his main,
With Pallas, power of wisdom, at their helms,
Will soon transport them to a happier clime,
Safe from insulting foes, from false allies;
And Eleutherian Jove will bless their flight.
Then shall we feel the unresisted force
Of Persia's navy, deluging our plains
With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks,
By us betray'd to bondage, will support
A Persian lord, and lift the' avenging spear
For our destruction. But, my friends, reject
Such mean, such dangerous counsels, which would
blast

Your long establish'd honours, and assist
The proud invader. O eternal king
Of gods and mortals, elevate our minds!
Each low and partial passion thence expel!
Greece is our general mother. All must join
In her defence, or separate each must fall.'

This said; authority and shame controll'd
The mute assembly. Agis too appear'd.
He from the Delphian cavern was return'd,
Where, taught by Phœbus on Parnassian cliffs,
The Pythian maid unfolded heaven's decrees.
He came; but discontent and grief o'ercast
His anxious brow. Reluctant was his tongue,
Yet seem'd full charg'd to speak. Religious dread
Each heart relax'd. On every visage hung
Sad expectation. Not a whi per told
The silent fear. Intensely all were fix'd,
All still as death, to hear the solemn tale.
As o'er the western waves, when every storm
Is hush'd within its cavern, and a breeze,
Soft breathing, lightly with its wings along
The slacken'd cordage glides, the sailor's ear
Perceives no sound throughout the vast expanse;
None, but the murmurs of the sliding prow,
Which slowly parts the smooth and yielding main;
So through the wide and listening crowd no sound,
No voice, but thine, O Agis! broke the air;
While thus the issue of thy awful charge
Thy lips deliver'd:—' Spartans, in your name
I went to Delphi. I inquir'd the doom
Of Lacedæmon from the impending war,
When in these words the deity replied—
" Inhabitants of Sparta, Persia's arms
Shall lay your proud and ancient seat in dust,

Unless a king, from Hercules deriv'd,
Cause Lacedæmon for his death to mourn."—

As, when the hand of Perseus had disclos'd
The snakes of dire Medusa, all who view'd
The Gorgon features were congeal'd to stone,
With ghastly eyeballs, on the hero bent,
And horror, living in their marble form ;
Thus, with amazement rooted where they stood,
In speechless terror frozen, on their kings
The Spartans gaz'd : but soon their anxious looks
All on the great Leonidas unite,
Long known his country's refuge. He alone
Remains unshaken. Rising, he displays
His godlike presence. Dignity and grace
Adorn his frame, where manly beauty joins
With strength Herculean. On his aspect shine
Sublimest virtue and desire of fame,
Where justice gives the laurel ; in his eye
The inextinguishable spark, which fires
The souls of patriots ; while his brow supports
Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.
Serene he cast his looks around, and spake—

‘ Why this astonishment on every face,
Ye men of Sparta ? does the name of death
Create this fear and wonder ? O my friends,
Why do we labour through the arduous paths
Which lead to virtue ? Fruitless were the toil,
Above the reach of human feet were plac'd
The distant summit, if the fear of death
Could intercept our passage. But a frown
Of unavailing terror he assumes
To shake the firmness of a mind which knows
That, wanting virtue, life is pain and woe,
That, wanting liberty, ev'n virtue mourns,

And looks around for happiness in vain.
Then speak, O Sparta! and demand my life :
My heart, exulting, answers to thy call,
And smiles on glorious fate. To live with fame
The gods allow to many ; but to die
With equal lustre is a blessing Jove
Among the choicest of his boons reserves,
Which but on few his sparing hand bestows.'

Salvation thus to Sparta he proclaim'd.
Joy, wrapt awhile in admiration, paus'd,
Suspending praise ; nor praise at last resounds
In high acclaim to rend the arch of heav'n ;
A reverential murmur breathes applause.
So were the pupils of Lycurgus train'd
To bridle nature. Public fear was dumb
Before their senate, ephori, and kings,
Nor exultation into clamour broke.

Amidst them rose Dieneces, and thus—
' Haste to Thermopylæ. To Xerxes show
The discipline of Spartans, long renown'd
In rigid warfare, with enduring minds,
Which neither pain, nor want, nor danger, bend.
Fly to the gate of Greece, which open stands
To slavery and rapine. They will shrink
Before your standard, and their native seats
Resume in abject Asia. Arm, ye sires,
Who with a growing race have bless'd the state :
That race, your parents, general Greece, forbid
Delay. Heaven summons. Equal to the cause
A chief behold. Can Spartans ask for more ?'

Bold Alpheus next : ' Command my swift return
Amid the Isthmian council, to declare
Your instant march.' His dictates all approve.
Back to the Isthmus he unwearied speeds.

Now from the' assembly with majestic steps
Forth moves their godlike king, with consciousworth
His generous bosom glowing. Such the port
Of his divine progenitor; impell'd
By ardent virtue, so Alcides trod
Invincible, to face in horrid war
The triple form of Geryon, or against
The bulk of huge Antæus match his strength.

Say, Muse, what heroes, by example fir'd,
Nor less by honour, offer'd now to bleed?
Dieneces the foremost, brave and staid,
Of veteran skill to range in martial fields
Well-order'd lines of battle. Maron next,
Twin-born with Alpheus, shows his manly frame.
Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen
Of great Leonidas, his friend, in war
His tried companion. Graceful were his steps,
And gentle his demeanour. Still his soul
Preserv'd the purest virtue, though refin'd
By arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.
High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal
Support and counsel from the gods requir'd,
Was sent the hallow'd messenger, to learn
Their mystic will, in oracles declar'd,
From rocky Delphi, from Dodona's shade,
Or sea-encircled Delos, or the cell
Of dark Trophonius, round Bœotia known.
Three hundred more complete the' intrepid band;
Illustrious fathers all of generous sons,
The future guardians of Laconia's state.
Then rose Megistias, leading forth his son,
Young Menalippus. Not of Spartan blood
Were they. Megistias, heaven-enlighten'd seer,
Had left his native Acarnanian shore;

Along the border of Eurotas chose
His place of dwelling. For his worth receiv'd,
And hospitably cherish'd, he the wreath
Pontific bore in Lacedæmon's camp,
Serene in danger, nor his sacred arm
From warlike toil secluding, nor untaught
To wield the sword, and poise the weighty spear.

But to his home Leonidas retir'd.
There calm in secret thought he thus explor'd
His mighty soul, while nature in his breast
A short emotion rais'd :—‘ What sudden grief,
What cold reluctance, now unmans my heart,
And whispers that I fear? Can death dismay
Leonidas; death, often seen and scorn'd,
When clad most dreadful in the battle's front?
Or to relinquish life in all its pride,
With all my honours blooming round my head,
Repines my soul; or rather to forsake,
Eternally forsake, my weeping wife,
My infant offspring, and my faithful friends?
Leonidas, awake! Shall these withstand
The public safety? Hark! thy country calls.
O sacred voice, I hear thee. At the sound
Reviving Virtue brightens in my heart;
Fear vanishes before her. Death, receive
My unreluctant hand. Immortal Fame,
Thou too, attendant on my righteous fall,
With wings unwearied wilt protect my tomb.’

His virtuous soul the hero had confirm'd
When Agis enter'd: ‘ If my tardy lips,
(He thus began) have hitherto forborne
To bring their grateful tribute of applause,
Which, as a Spartan, to thy worth I owe,

Forgive the brother of thy queen. Her grief
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man!
Though Lacedæmon claim thy prime regard,
Forget not her, sole victim of distress
Amid the general safety. To assuage
Such pain, fraternal tenderness is weak.'

The king embrac'd him, and replied, 'O best,
O dearest man! conceive not but my soul
To her is fondly bound, from whom my days
Their largest share of happiness deriv'd.
Can I who yield my breath lest others mourn,
Lest thousands should be wretched, when she pines,
More lov'd than any, though less dear than all,
Can I neglect her griefs? In future days,
If thou with grateful memory record
My name and fate, O Sparta! pass not this
Unheeded by. The life for thee resign'd
Knew not a painful hour to tire my soul,
Nor were they common joys I left behind.'

So spake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd
In tenderest passion. Then, in eager haste
The faithful partner of his bed he sought.
Amid her weeping children sat the queen,
Immovable and mute. Her swimming eyes
Bent to the earth. Her arms were folded o'er
Her labouring bosom, blotted with her tears.
As, when a dusky mist involves the sky,
The moon through all the dreary vapours spreads
The radiant vesture of her silver light
O'er the dull face of nature; so the queen,
Divinely graceful, shining through her grief,
Brighten'd the cloud of woe. Her lord approach'd.
Soon, as in gentlest phrase his well-known voice

Awak'd her drooping spirit, for a time
Care was appeas'd. She lifts her languid head.
She gives this utterance to her tender thoughts—

‘ O thou, whose presence is my sole delight ;
If thus Leonidas, thy looks and words
Can check the rapid current of distress,
How am I mark'd for misery ! How long !
When of life's journey less than half is pass'd,
And I must hear those calming sounds no more,
Nor see that face which makes affliction smile !’

This said, returning grief o'erwhelms her breast.
Her orphan children, her devoted lord,
Pale, bleeding, breathless on the field of death,
Her ever-during solitude of woe,
All rise in mingled horror to her sight,
When thus in bitterest agony she spake—

‘ O whither art thou going from my arms ?
Shall I no more behold thee ? Oh ! no more,
In conquest clad, o'erspread with glorious dust,
Wilt thou return to greet thy native soil,
And find thy dwelling joyful ! Ah ! too brave,
Why would'st thou hurry to the dreary gates
Of death, uncall'd ? Another might have bled,
Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,
Less dear to all, and Sparta been secure.
Now every eye with mine is drown'd in tears.
All with these babes lament a father lost.
Alas ! how heavy is our lot of pain !
Our sighs must last when every other breast
Exults in safety, purchas'd by our loss.
Thou didst not heed our anguish—didst not seek
One pause for my instruction how to bear
Thy endless absence, or like thee to die.’

Unutterable sorrow here confin'd
Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd—
‘I see, I share thy agony. My soul
Ne'er knew how warm the prevalence of love,
How strong a parent's feelings, till this hour ;
Nor was she once insensible to thee
In all her fervour to assert my fame.
How had the honours of my name been stain'd
By hesitation? Shameful life, preferr'd
By an inglorious colleague, would have left
No choice but what were infancy to shun,
Not virtue to accept. Then deem no more
That, of thy love regardless, or thy tears,
I rush uncall'd to death. The voice of fate,
The gods, my fame, my country, press my doom.
Oh! thou dear mourner! Wherefore swells afresh
That tide of woe? Leonidas must fall.
Alas! far heavier misery impends
O'er thee and these; if, soften'd by thy tears,
I shamefully refuse to yield that breath,
Which justice, glory, liberty, and heav'n,
Claim for my country, for my sons, and thee.
Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect
On my paternal fondness. Hath my heart
E'er known a pause in love, or pious care?
Now shall that care, that tenderness be shown
Most warm, most faithful. When thy husband dies
For Lacedæmon's safety; thou wilt share,
Thou and thy children, the diffusive good.
I am selected by the immortal gods
To save a people. Should my timid heart
That sacred charge abandon, I should plunge
Thee too in shame, in sorrow. Thou wouldst mourn

With Lacedæmon ; wouldst with her sustain
Thy painful portion of oppression's weight.
Behold thy sons, now worthy of their name,
Their Spartan birth. Their glowing bloom would
pine

Depress'd, dishonour'd, and their youthful hearts
Beat at the sound of liberty no more.
On their own merit, on their father's fame,
When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,
Before the world illustrious will they rise,
Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.'

Here paus'd the patriot. In religious awe
Grief heard the voice of virtue. No complaint
The solemn silence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow ;
Ceas'd for a moment, soon again to stream.
Behold in arms before the palace drawn,
His brave companions of the war demand
Their leader's presence. Then her griefs, renew'd,
Surpassing utterance, intercept her sighs.
Each accent freezes on her faltering tongue.
In speechless anguish on the hero's breast
She sinks. On every side his children press,
Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.
His soul no longer struggles to confine
Her agitation. Down the hero's cheek,
Down flows the manly sorrow. Great in woe,
Amid his children, who enclose him round,
He stands indulging tenderness and love
In graceful tears, when thus, with lifted eyes
Address'd to heaven, 'Thou ever-living pow'r,
Look down propitious, sire of gods and men !
O to this faithful woman, whose desert
May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace !
And thou my bright forefather, seed of Jove,

O Hercules, neglect not these thy race!
But since that spirit I from thee derive
Transports me from them to resistless fate,
Be thou their guardian! Teach them, like thyself,
By glorious labours to embellish life,
And from their father let them learn to die!

Here ending, forth he issues, and assumes
Before the ranks his station of command.
They now proceed. So mov'd the host of heav'n
On Phlegra's plains, to meet the giant-sons
Of earth and Titan. From Olympus march'd
The deities embattled; while their king
Tower'd in the front, with thunder in his grasp.
Thus through the streets of Lacedæmon pass'd
Leonidas. Before his footsteps bow
The multitude exulting. On he treads
Rever'd. Unsated, their enraptur'd sight
Pursues his graceful stature, and their tongues
Extol and hail him as their guardian god.
Firm in his nervous hand he gripes the spear.
Low as the ankles, from his shoulders hangs
The massy shield, and o'er his burnish'd helm
The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths,
Around whose brows entwining laurels play,
In lofty-sounding strains his praise record;
While snowy-finger'd virgins all the way
Bestrew with odorous garlands. Now his breast
Is all possess'd by glory: which dispell'd
Whate'er of grief remain'd, or vain regret
For those he left behind. The reverend train
Of Lacedæmon's senate last appear,
To take their final, solemn leave, and grace
Their hero's parting steps. Around him flow
In civil pomp their venerable robes,

Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The shining troop
Of warriors press behind him. Maron here,
With Menalippus, warm in flowery prime ;
There Agis, there Megistias, and the chief
Dieneces. Laconia's dames ascend
The loftiest mansions ; thronging o'er the roofs,
Applaud their sons, their husbands, as they march.
So parted Argo from the' Iolchian strand
To plough the foaming surge. Thessalia's nymphs,
Rang'd on the cliffs, o'ershading Neptune's face,
Still on the distant vessel fix'd their eyes
Admiring ; still in pæans bless'd the helm,
By Greece intrusted with her chosen sons
For high adventures on the Colchian shore.

Swift on his course Leonidas proceeds.
Soon is Eurotas pass'd, and Lerna's bank,
Where his victorious ancestor subdued
The many-headed Hydra, and the lake
To endless fame consign'd. The' unwearied bands
Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,
And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.
Six days incessant was their march pursued,
When to their ear the hoarse-resounding waves
Beat on the Isthmus. Here the tents are spread.
Below the wide horizon then the sun
Had dipp'd his beamy locks. The queen of night
Gleam'd from the centre of the' ethereal vault,
And o'er the raven plumes of darkness shed
Her placid light. Leonidas detains
Dieneces and Agis. Open stands
The tall pavilion, and admits the moon.
As here they sit conversing, from the hill,
Which rose before them, one of noble port
Is seen descending. Lightly down the slope

He treads. He calls aloud. They heard, they knew
The voice of Alpheus, whom the king address'd—

‘ O thou, with swiftness by the gods endued
To match the ardour of thy daring soul,
What from the Isthmus draws thee? Do the Greeks
Neglect to arm and face the public foe?’

‘ Good news gives wings,’ said Alpheus. ‘ Greece
is arm’d.

The neighbouring Isthmus holds the’ Arcadian
bands.

From Mantinea Diophantus leads

Five hundred spears; nor less from Tegea’s walls
With Hegesander move. A thousand more,

Who in Orchomenus reside, and range

Along Parrhasius or Cyllene’s brow,

Who near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,

Or on Alphean banks, with various chiefs,

Expect thy presence. Most is Clonius fam’d,

Of stature huge, unshaken rock of war.

Four hundred warriors brave Alcinaeon draws

From stately Corinth’s towers. Two hundred march

From Phlius: them Eupalamus commands.

An equal number of Mycenæ’s race

Aristobulus heads. Through fear alone

Of thee, and threatening Greece, the Thebans arm.

A few in Thebes authority and rule

Usurp. Corrupted with Barbarian gold,

They quench the generous, elutherian flame

In every heart. The eloquent they bribe.

By specious tales the multitude they cheat;

Establishing base measures on the plea

Of public safety. Others are immers’d

In all the sloth of plenty, who, unmov’d,

In shameful ease, behold the state betray’d.

Aw'd by thy name, four hundred took the field.
The wily Anaxander is their chief,
With Leontiades. To see their march
I staid; then hasten'd to survey the straits,
Which thou shalt render sacred to renown.

' For ever mingled with a crumbling soil,
Which moulders round the indented Malian coast,
The sea rolls slimy. On a solid rock,
Which forms the inmost limit of a bay,
Thermopylæ is stretch'd. Where broadest spread,
It measures threescore paces, bounded here
By the salt ooze, which underneath presents
A dreary surface; there the lofty cliffs
Of wooded Œta overlook the pass,
And far beyond, o'er half the surge below,
Their horrid umbrage cast. Across the mouth
An ancient bulwark of the Phocians stands,
A wall with gates and towers. The Locrian force
Was marching forward. Them I pass'd, to greet
Demophilus of Thespia, who had pitch'd
Seven hundred spears before the important fence.
His brother's son attends the reverend chief,
Young Dithyrambus. He for noble deeds,
Yet more for temperance of mind, renown'd,
In early bloom with brightest honours shines,
Nor wantons in the blaze.' Here Agis spake—

' Well hast thou painted that illustrious youth.
He is my host at Thespia. Though adorn'd
With various wreaths, by fame by fortune bless'd,
His gentle virtues take from Envy's lips
Their blasting venom; and her baneful eye
Strives on his worth to smile.' In silence all
Again remain, when Alpheus thus proceeds—

' Platæa's chosen veterans I saw,

Small in their number, matchless in their fame.
Diomedon the leader. Keen his sword
At Marathon was felt, where Asia bled.
These guard Thermopylæ. Among the hills,
Unknown to strangers, winds an upper strait,
Which by a thousand Phocians is secur'd.
Ere these brave Greeks I quitted, in the bay
A stately chieftain of the Athenian fleet
Arriv'd. I join'd him. Copious in thy praise,
He utter'd rapture, but austere ly blam'd
Laconia's tardy counsels; while the ships
Of Athens long had stemm'd Eubœan tides,
Which flow not distant from our future post.
This was the far-fam'd Æschylus, by Mars,
By Pææbus lov'd. Parnassus him proclaims
The first of Attic poets; him the plains
Of Marathon a soldier, tried in arms.'

' Well may Athenians murmur, (said the king :)
Too long hath Sparta slumber'd on her shield.
By morn beyond the Isthmus we will spread
A generous banner. In Laconian strains
Of Alcman and Terpander lives the fame
Of our forefathers. Let our deeds attract
The brighter muse of Athens, in the song
Of Æschylus divine. Now frame thy choice.
Share in our fate; or, hastening home, report
How much already thy discerning mind,
Thy active limbs, have merited from me;
How serv'd thy country.' From the impatient lips
Of Alpheus swift these fervid accents broke—

' I have not measur'd such a tract of land,
Have not untir'd, beheld the setting sun,
Nor through the shade of midnight urg'd my steps,
To animate the Grecians, that myself

Might be exempt from warlike toil, or death.
Return? Ah! no. A second time my speed
Shall visit thee, Thermopylæ. My limbs
Shall at thy side, Leonidas, obtain
An honourable grave. And, oh! amid
His country's perils, if a Spartan breast
May feel a private sorrow, fierce revenge
I seek; not only for the' insulted state,
But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope,
Than I and Maron, bless'd our father's years,
Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.
His mind, while tender in his opening prime,
Was bent to strenuous virtue. Generous scorn
Of pain or danger, taught his early strength
To struggle patient with severest toils.
Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,
When frozen showers had swoln Eurotas' stream,
Amid the' impetuous channel would he plunge,
To breast the torrent. On a fatal day,
As in the sea his active limbs he bath'd,
A savage corsair of the Persian king,
My brother, naked and defenceless, bore,
Ev'n in my sight, to Asia; there to waste,
With all the promise of its growing worth,
His youth in bondage. Tedious were the tale,
Should I recount my pains, my father's woes,
The days he wept, the sleepless nights he beat
His aged bosom: and shall Alpheus' spear
Be absent from Thermopylæ, nor claim,
O Polydorus! vengeance for thy wrongs,
In that first slaughter of the barbarous foe?
Here interpos'd Dieneces. Their hands
He grasp'd, and cordial transport thus express'd—

‘ O that Lycurgus from the shades might rise
To praise the virtue which his laws inspire !’

Thus, till the dead of night, these heroes pass’d
The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy’d
Each other’s virtue. Happiest of men !
At length, with gentle heaviness, the power
Of sleep invades their eyelids, and constrains
Their magnanimity and zeal to rest ;
When, sliding down the hemisphere, the moon
Immers’d in midnight-shade her silver head.

LEONIDAS.



BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas, on his approach to the Isthmus, is met by the leaders of the troops sent from other Grecian states, and by the deputies who composed the Isthmian council. He harangues them; then proceeds, in conjunction with these forces, towards Thermopylæ. On the first day he is joined by Dithyrampus; on the third he reaches a valley in Locris, where he is entertained by Oileus, the public host of the Lacedæmonian state; and the next morning is accompanied by him in a car to the temple of Pan: he finds Medon there, the son of Oileus, and commander of two thousand Locrians, already posted at Thermopylæ, and by him is informed that the army of Xerxes is in sight of the pass.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

AURORA spreads her purple beams around,
When move the Spartans. Their approach is known.
The Isthmian council, and the different chiefs
Who lead the' auxiliar bands, advance to meet
Leonidas; Eupalamus the strong,
Alcinæon, Clonius, Diophantus brave,
With Hegesander. At their head is seen
Aristobulus, whom Mycenæ's ranks
Obey; Mycenæ, once august in power,
In splendid wealth, and vaunting still the name
Of Agamemnon. To Laconia's king
The chieftain spake—' Leonidas, survey
Mycenæ's race. Should every other Greek
Be aw'd by Xerxes, and his eastern host,
Believe not we can fear, deriv'd from those
Who once conducted o'er the foaming surge
The strength of Greece; who desert left the fields
Of ravag'd Asia, and her proudest walls
From their foundations levell'd to the ground.'

Leonidas replies not, but his voice
Directs to all—' Illustrious warriors, hail!
Who thus undaunted signalize your faith,
Your generous ardour, in the common cause.
But you whose counsels prop the Grecian state,

O venerable synod, who consign
To our protecting sword the gate of Greece,
Thrice hail! Whate'er by valour we obtain,
Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes
Contemplate every city, and discern
Their various tempers. Some, with partial care,
To guard their own, neglect the public weal.
Unmov'd and cold are others. Terror here,
Corruption there presides. O fire the brave
To general efforts in the general cause.
Confirm the wavering. Animate the cold,
The timid. Watch the faithless. Some betray
Themselves and Greece. Their perfidy prevent,
Or call them back to honour. Let us all
Be link'd in sacred union, and this land
May face the world's whole multitude in arms.
If for the spoil, by Paris borne to Troy,
A thousand keels the Hellespont o'erspread,
Shall not again confederated Greece
Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give
What once she gave to fame? Behold, we haste
To stop the invading tyrant. Till we fall,
He shall not pour his myriads on your plains.
But, as the gods conceal how long our strength
May stand unvanquish'd, or how soon may yield,
Waste not a moment, till consenting Greece
Range all her free-born numbers in the field.'

Leonidas concluded. Awful step
Before the sage assembly one, supreme
And old in office, who address'd the king—
'Thy bright example every heart unites.
From thee her happiest omens Greece derives
Of concord, safety, liberty and fame.
Go then, O first of mortals! go, impress

Amaze and terror on the barbarous host ;
The free-born Greeks instructing life to deem
Less dear than honour, and their country's cause.'

This heard, Leonidas, thy secret soul,
Exulting, tasted of the sweet reward
Due to thy name through endless time. Once more
His eyes he turn'd, and view'd in rapturous thought
His native land, which he alone can save ;
Then summon'd all his majesty, and o'er
The Isthmus trod. The phalanx moves behind
In deep arrangement. So the imperial ship,
With stately bulk, along the heaving tide,
In military pomp, conducts the pow'r
Of some proud navy, bounding from the port,
To bear the vengeance of a mighty state
Against a tyrant's walls. Till sultry noon
They march ; when, halting as they take repast,
Across the plain before them, they descry
A troop of Thespians. One above the rest
In eminence precedes. His glittering shield,
Whose gold emblazon'd orb collects the beams
Cast by meridian Phœbus from his throne,
Flames like another sun. A snowy plume,
With wanton curls disporting in the breeze,
Floats o'er his dazzling casque. On nearer view,
Beneath the radiant honours of his crest,
A countenance of youth, in rosy prime
And manly sweetness, won the fix'd regard
Of each beholder. With a modest grace
He came, respectful, tow'rd the king, and show'd
That all ideas of his own desert
Were sunk in veneration. So the god
Of light salutes his empyreal sire ;
When from his altar, in the embowering grove

Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
Of Tenedos or Claros, where he hears
In hymns his praises from the sons of men,
He reascends the high Olympian seats :
Such reverential homage on his brow,
O'ershading, softens his effulgent bloom
With loveliness and grace. The king receives
The illustrious Thespian thus—' My willing tongue
Would style thee Dithyrambus. Thou dost bear
All in thy aspect to become that name,
Renown'd for worth and valour. O reveal
Thy birth, thy charge. Whoe'er thou art, my soul
Desires to know thee, and would call thee friend.'

To him the youth—' O bulwark of our weal,
My name is Dithyrambus ; which the lips
Of some benevolent, some generous friend,
To thee have sounded in a partial strain,
And thou hast heard with favour. In thy sight
I stand deputed by the Thespian chief,
The Theban, Locrian, by the fam'd in war,
Diomedon, to hasten thy approach.
Three days will bring the hostile powers in view.'

He said. The ready standards are uprear'd.
By zeal enforc'd, till evening shadows fall
The march continues ; then by day-spring sweeps
The earliest dews. The van by Agis led,
Displays the grisly face of battle, rough
With spears, obliquely trail'd in dreadful length
Along the indented way. Beside him march'd
His gallant Thespian host. The centre boasts
Leonidas, the leader, who retains
The good Megistias near him. In the rear
Dieneces commanded, who in charge
Kept Menalippus, offspring of his friend,

For these instructions—‘ Let thine eye, young man,
Dwell on the order of our varying march ;
As champaign, valley, mountain or defile,
Require a change. The eastern tyrant thus
Conducts not his Barbarians, like the sands
In number. Yet the discipline of Greece
They will encounter, feeble as the sands
Dash’d on a rock, and scatter’d in their fall.’

To him the inquiring youth—‘ The martial tread,
The flute’s slow warble, both in just accord
Entrance my senses ; but let wonder ask,
Why is that tender vehicle of sound
Preferr’d in war by Sparta? other Greeks
To more sonorous music rush in fight.’

‘ Son of my friend, (Dieneces rejoins)
Well dost thou note. I praise thee. Sparta’s law
With human passions, source of human woes,
Maintains perpetual strife. She sternly curbs
Our infant hearts, till passion yields its seat
To principle and order. Music too,
By Spartans lov’d, is temper’d by the law ;
Still to her plan subservient, melts in notes
Which cool and soothe, not irritate and warm.
Thus, by habitual abstinence applied
To every sense, suppressing nature’s fire
By modes of duty, not by ardour sway’d,
O’er each impetuous enemy abroad,
At home o’er vice and pleasure we prevail.’

‘ O might I merit a Laconian name !
(The Acarnanian answer’d.) But explain
What is the land we traverse? What the hill,
Whose parted summit in a spacious void
Admits a bed of clouds? And, gracious, tell
Whose are those suits of armour which I see

Borne by two Helots?' At the questions pleas'd,
Dieneces continues—' Those belong
To Alpheus and his brother. Light of foot,
They, disencumber'd, all at large precede
This ponderous band. They guide a troop of slaves,
Our missile-weapon'd Helots, to observe,
Provide, forewarn, and obstacles remove.
This tract is Phocis. That divided hill
Is fam'd Parnassus. Thence the voice divine
Was sent by Phœbus, summoning to death
The king of Sparta. From his fruitful blood
A crop will spring of victory to Greece.'

' And these three hundred, high in birth and rank,
All citizens of Sparta'—cries the youth :
' They all must bleed, (Dieneces subjoins)
All, with their leader : so the law decrees.'

To him, with earnest looks, the generous youth—
' Wilt thou not place me in that glorious hour
Close to thy buckler? Gratitude will brace
Thy pupil's arm to manifest the force
Of thy instruction.'—' Menalippus, no,
Return'd the chief; ' Not thou of Spartan breed,
Nor call'd to perish. Thou, unwedded too,
Would'st leave no race behind thee. Live to praise,
Live to enjoy, our solitary fall.

Reply is needless. See, the sun descends.
The army halts. I trust thee with a charge,
Son of Megistias. In my name command
The' attendant Helots to erect our camp.
We pitch our tents in Locris.' Quick the youth
His charge accomplish'd. From a generous meal,
Where, at the call of Alpheus, Locris shower'd
Her Amalthean plenty on her friends,
The sated warriors soon in slumber lose

The memory of toil. His watchful round
Dieneces, with Menalippus, takes.

The moon rode high and clear. Her light benign
To their pleas'd eyes a rural dwelling show'd,
All unadorn'd, but seemly. Either side
Was fenc'd by trees high shadowing. The front
Look'd on a crystal pool, by feather'd tribes
At every dawn frequented. From the springs
A small redundance fed a shallow brook,
O'er smoothest pebbles rippling, just to wake,
Not startle, Silence, and the ear of Night
Entice to listen undisturb'd. Around,
The grass was cover'd by reposing sheep,
Whose drowsy guard no longer bay'd the moon.

The warriors stopp'd, contemplating the seat
Of rural quiet. Suddenly a swain
Steps forth. His fingers touch the breathing reed.
Uprise the fleecy train. Each faithful dog
Is rous'd. All, heedful of the wonted sound,
Their known conductor follow. Slow behind
The' observing warriors move. Ere long they reach
A broad and verdant circle, thick enclos'd
With birches straight and tall, whose glossy rind
Is clad in silver from Diana's car.
The ground was holy, and the central spot
An altar bore to Pan. Beyond the orb
Of screening trees, the' external circuit swarm'd
With sheep and beeves, each neighbouring hamlet's
wealth

Collected. Thither soon the swain arriv'd,
Whom, by the name of Melibæus hail'd,
A peasant throng surrounded. As their chief,
He, nigh the altar, to his rural friends
Address'd these words: ' O, sent from different lords

With contribution to the public wants,
Time presses. God of peasants, bless our course !
Speed to the slow-pac'd ox for once impart ;
That o'er these vallies, cool'd by dewy night,
We, to our summons true, ere noontide blaze,
May join Oileus, and his praise obtain !

He ceas'd. To rustic madrigals and pipes,
Combin'd with bleating notes and tinkling bells,
With clamour shrill from busy tongues of dogs,
Or hollow-sounding from the deep-mouth'd ox,
Along the valley, herd and flock are driv'n
Successive; halting oft to harmless spoil
Of flowers and herbage, springing in their sight.
While Melibœus marshall'd with address
The inoffensive host, unseen in shades,
Dieneces applauded, and the youth
Of Menalippus caution'd : ' Let no word
Impede the careful peasant. On his charge
Depends our welfare. Diligent and staid,
He suits his godlike master. Thou wilt see
That righteous hero soon. Now sleep demands
Our debt to nature.'—On a carpet dry
Of moss, beneath a wholesome beech, they lay,
Arm'd as they were. Their slumber, short, retires
With night's last shadow. At their warning rous'd,
The troops proceed. The' admiring eye of youth
In Menalippus caught the morning rays,
To guide its travel o'er the landscape wide
Of cultivated hillocks, dales, and lawns ;
Where mansions, hamlets interpos'd ; where domes
Rose to their gods, through consecrated shades.
He then exclaims : ' O say, can Jove devote
These fields to ravage, those abodes to flames ?'

The Spartan answers : ' Ravage, sword, and fire,

Must be endur'd, as incidental ills.
Suffice it these invaders, soon or late,
Will leave this soil, more fertile by their blood,
With spoils abundant to rebuild the fanes.
Precarious benefits are these, thou seest,
So fram'd by heaven ; but virtue is a good
No foe can spoil, and lasting to the grave.'

Beside the public way, an oval fount
Of marble sparkled with a silver spray
Of falling rills, collected from above.
The army halted, and their hollow casques
Dipp'd in the limpid stream. Behind it rose
An edifice, compos'd of native roots,
And oaken trunks, of knotted girth unwrought.
Within were beds of moss. Old, batter'd arms,
Hung from the roof. The curious chiefs approach.
These words, engraven on a tablet rude,
Megistias reads ; the rest in silence hear.
' Yon marble fountain, by Oileus plac'd,
To thirsty lips in living water flows ;
For weary steps he fram'd this cool retreat ;
A grateful offering here to rural peace,
His dinted shield, his helmet, he resign'd.
O passenger ! if, born to noble deeds,
Thou wouldst obtain perpetual grace from Jove,
Devote thy vigour to heroic toils,
And thy decline to hospitable cares.
Rest here ; then seek Oileus in his vale.'

' O Jove ! (burst forth Leonidas) thy grace
Is large and various. Length of days and bliss
To him thou giv'st to me a shorten'd term,
Nor yet less happy. Grateful, we confess
Thy different bounties, measur'd full to both.
Come, let us seek Oileus in his vale.

The word is given. The heavy phalanx moves.
The light pac'd Helots long, ere morning dawn'd,
Had recommenc'd their progress. They o'ertook
Blithe Melibœus in a spacious vale,
The fruitfullest in Locris, ere the sun
Shot forth his noontide beams. On either side
A surface scarce perceptibly ascends.
Luxuriant vegetation crowds the soil
With trees close rang'd and mingling. Rich the loads
Of native fruitage to the sight reveal
Their vigorous nurture. There the flushing peach,
The apple, citron, almond, pear, and date,
Pomegranates, purple mulberry, and fig,
From interlacing branches mix their hues
And scents, the passenger's delight; but leave
In the mid vale a pasture long and large,
Exuberant in vivid verdure, cropp'd
By herds, by flocks, innumerable. Neighbouring
knolls
Are speckled o'er with cots, whose humble roofs
To herdsmen, shepherds, and laborious hinds,
Once yielded rest unbroken, till the name
Of Xerxes shook their quiet. Yet this day
Was festive. Swains and damsels, youth and age,
From toil, from home enlarg'd, disporting, fill'd
The' enliven'd meadow. Under every shade
A hoary minstrel sat; the maidens danc'd;
Flocks bleated; oxen low'd; the horses neigh'd;
With joy the vale resounded; terror fled;
Leonidas was nigh. The welcome news
By Melibœus, hastening to his lord,
Was loudly told. The Helots too appear'd,
While with his brother Alpheus thus discours'd—
' In this fair valley old Oileus dwells,

The first of Locrians, of Laconia's state
The public host. Yon large pavilions mark,
They promise welcome. Thither let us bend,
There tell our charge.' This said, they both advance.
A hoary band receives them. One, who seem'd
In rank, in age, superior, wav'd his hand
To Melibœus, standing near, and spake—

' By this my faithful messenger I learn
That you are friends. Nor yet the' invader's foot
Hath pass'd our confines. Else, o'ercast by time,
My sight would scarce distinguish friend or foe,
A Grecian or Barbarian.' Alpheus then—

' We come from Lacedæmon, of our king
Leonidas forerunners.'—' Is he nigh?

The cordial senior tenderly exclaims—

' I am Oileus. Him a beardless boy
I knew in Lacedæmon. Twenty years
Are since elaps'd. He scarce remembers me.
But I will feast him, as becomes my zeal,
Him and his army. You, my friends, repose.'

They sit. He still discourses—' Spartan guests!
In me an aged soldier you behold.
From Ajax, fam'd in Agamemnon's war,
Oïlean Ajax, flows my vital stream,
Unmix'd with his presumption. I have borne
The highest functions in the Locrian state,
Not with dishonour. Self-dismiss'd, my age
Hath in this valley on my own demesne
Liv'd tranquil, not recluse. My comrades these,
Old magistrates and warriors, like myself,
Releas'd from public care, with me retir'd
To rural quiet. Through our last remains
Of time in sweet garrulity we slide,
Recounting pass'd atchievements of our prime ;

Nor wanting liberal means for liberal deeds;
Here bless'd, here blessing, we reside. These flocks,
These herds and pastures, these our numerous hinds,
And poverty hence exil'd, may divulge
Our generous abundance. We can spread
A banquet for an army. By the state
Once more entreated, we accept a charge,
To age well suited. By our watchful care
'The goddess Plenty in your tents shall dwell.'

He scarce had finish'd, when the ensigns broad
Of Lacedæmon's phalanx down the vale
Were seen to wave, unfolding at the sound
Of flutes, soft warbling in the' expressive mood
Of Dorian sweetness, unadorn'd. Around,
In notes of welcome, every shepherd tun'd
His sprightly reed. The damsels show'd their hair,
Diversified with flowrets. Garlands gay,
Rush-woven baskets, glowing with the dyes
Of amaranths, of jasmine, roses, pinks,
And violets, they carry, tripping light
Before the steps of grimly-featur'd Mars,
To blend the smiles of Flora with his frown.
Leonidas they chant in silvan lays,
Him the defender of their meads and groves,
Him, more than Pan, a guardian to their flocks.
While Philomela, in her poplar shade,
Awaken'd, strains her emulating throat,
And joins, with liquid trills, the swelling sounds.

Behold, Oileus and his ancient train
Accost Laconia's king, whose looks and words
Confess remembrance of the Locrian chief.

'Thrice hail, Oileus, Sparta's noble host!
Thou art of old acquainted with her sons,
Their laws, their manners. Musical as brave,

Train'd to delight, in smooth Terpander's lay,
In Alcman's Dorian measure, we enjoy,
In thy melodious vale, the unlabour'd strains
Of rural pipes, to nightingales attun'd.
Our heart-felt gladness deems the golden age
Subsisting where thou govern'st. Still these tones
Of joy continued, may thy dwellings hear!
Still may this plenty, unmolested crown
The favour'd district! May thy reverend dust
Have peaceful shelter in thy father's tomb!
Kind heaven, that merit to my sword impart!"

By joy uplifted, forth Oileus broke—
'Thou dost recall me then! O, sent to guard
These fruits from spoil, these hoary locks from shame,
Permit thy wearied soldiers to partake
Of Locrian plenty. Enter thou my tents,
Thou and thy captains. I salute them all.'

The hero full of dignity and years,
Once bold in action, placid now in ease,
Ev'n by his look, benignly cast around,
Gives lassitude relief. With native grace,
With heart-effus'd complacency, the king
Accepts the liberal welcome; while his troops,
To relaxation and repast dismiss'd,
Pitch on the wounded green their bristling spears.

Still is the evening. Under chesnut shades,
With interweaving poplars, spacious stands
A well-fram'd tent. There calm the heroes sit,
The genial board enjoy, and feast the mind
On sage discourse; which thus Oileus clos'd—

'Behold, night lifts her signal, to invoke
That friendly god who owns the drowsy wand.
To Mercury this last libation flows.
Farewell till morn.' They separate, they sleep;

All but Oileus, who forsakes the tent.
On Melibœus in these words he calls—
' Approach, my faithful friend.' To him the swain—
' Thy bondman hears thy call.' The chief replies
Loud, for the gathering peasantry to heed—

' Come, Melibœus, it is surely time
That my repeated gift, the name of friend,
Thou shouldst accept. The name of bondman
wounds

My ear. Be free. No longer best of men,
Reject that boon; nor let my feeble head,
To thee a debtor, as to gracious heav'n,
Descend and sleep unthankful in the grave.
Though yielding Nature daily feels decay,
Thou dost prevent all care. The gods estrange
Pain from my pillow, have secur'd my breast
From weeds, too oft in aged soils profuse,
From self-tormenting petulance and pride,
From jealousy and envy at the fame
Of younger men. Leonidas will dim
My former lustre, as that silver orb
Outshines the meanest star; and I rejoice,
O Melibœus, these elect of Jove
To certain death advance. Immortal powers!
How social, how endearing is their speech!
How flow in liberal cheerfulness their hearts!
To such a period verging, men like these
Age well may envy, and that envy take
The genuine shape of virtue. Let their span
Of earthly being, while it lasts, contain
Each earthly joy. 'Till blest Elysium spread
Her ever blooming, inexhausted stores
To their glad sight, be mine the grateful task
To drain my plenty. From the vaulted caves

Our vessels large of well fermented wine,
From all our granaries lift the treasur'd corn.
Go, load the groaning axles. Nor forget
With garments new to greet Melissa's nymphs.
To her a triple change of vestments bear,
With twenty lambs and twenty speckled kids.
Be it your care, my peasants, some to aid
Him, your director, others to select
Five hundred oxen, thrice a thousand sheep,
Of lusty swains a thousand. Let the morn,
When first she blushes, see my will perform'd.'

They heard. Their lord's injunctions to fulfil
Was their ambition. He, unresting, mounts
A ready car. The coursers had enroll'd
His name in Isthmian and Nemean games.
By moon-light, floating on the splendid reins,
He, o'er the busy vale intent, is borne
From place to place; o'erlooks, directs, forgets
That he is old. Meantime, the shades of night,
Retiring, wake Dieneces. He gives
The word. His pupil seconds. Every band
Is arm'd. Day opens. Sparta's king appears.
Oileus greets him. In his radiant car
The senior stays, reluctant; but his guest
So wills, in Spartan reverence to age.
Then spake the Locrian: 'To assist thy camp
A chosen band of peasants I detach.
I trust thy valour. Doubt not thou my care;
Nor doubt that swain.' Oileus, speaking, look'd
On Melibœus: 'Skilful he commands
These hinds. Him wise, him faithful, I have prov'd,
More than Enmæus to Laertes' son.
To him the' Cætæan woods, their devious tracks,
Are known, each rill and fountain. Near the pass

Two thousand Locrians wilt thou find encamp'd,
My eldest born their leader, Medon nam'd,
Well exercis'd in arms. My daughter dwells
On Ceta : sage Melissa she is call'd ;
Enlighten'd priestess of the tuneful nine.
She haply may accost thee. Thou wilt lend
An ear. Not fruitless are Melissa's words.
Now, servants, bring the sacred wine.' Obey'd,
He from his seat uprising, thus proceeds—

‘ Lo ! from this chalice a libation pure
To Mars, to Grecian liberty and laws,
To their protector, eleutherian Jove,
To his nine daughters, who record the brave,
To thy renown, Leonidas, I pour ;
And take an old man's benediction too.’

He stopt. Affection, struggling in his heart,
Burst forth again—‘ Illustrious guest, afford
Another hour ! That slender space of time
Yield to my sole possession. While the troops,
Already glittering down the dewy vale,
File through its narrow'd outlet, near my side
Deign to be carried, and my talk endure.’

The king, well pleas'd, ascends. Slow move the
steeds

Behind the rear. Oileus grasps his hand,
Then, in the fulness of his soul, pursues—

‘ Thy veneration for Laconia's laws
That I may strengthen, may to rapture warm,
Hear me display the melancholy fruits
Of lawless will. When o'er the Lidian plains
The' innumerable tents of Xerxes spread,
His vassal, Pythius, who in affluent means
Surpasses me, as that Barbarian prince
Thou dost in virtue, entertain'd the host,

And proffer'd all his treasures. These the king
Refusing, ev'n augmented from his own.
An act of fancy, not habitual grace,
A sparkling vapour through the regal gloom
Of cruelty and pride. He now prepar'd
To march from Sardis, when with humble tears
The good old man besought him—"Let the king,
Propitious, hear a parent! in thy train
I have five sons. Ah! leave my eldest born,
Thy future vassal, to sustain my age!"
The tyrant fell replied—"Presumptuous man,
Who art my slave, in this tremendous war
Is not my person hazarded, my race,
My consort? Former merit saves from death
Four of thy offspring. Him, so dearly priz'd,
Thy folly hath destroy'd." His body straight
Was hewn asunder. By the public way
On either side a bleeding half was cast,
And millions pass'd between. O, Spartan king!
Taught to revere the sanctity of laws,
The acts of Xerxes with thy own compare,
His fame with thine. The curses of mankind
Give him renown. He marches to destroy,
But thou to save. Behold the trees are bent,
Each eminence is loaded thick with crowds,
From cots, from every hamlet pour'd abroad,
To bless thy steps, to celebrate thy praise.'

Ofttimes the king his decent brow inclin'd,
Mute and obsequious to an elder's voice,
Which through the' instructed ear unceasing flow'd,
In eloquence and knowledge. Scarce an hour
Was fled. The narrow dale was left behind.
A causeway broad disclos'd an ancient pile
Of military fame. A trophy large,

Compact with crested morions, targets rude,
With spears and corselets, dimm'd by eating age,
Stood near a lake pellucid, smooth, profound,
Of circular expanse; whose bosom show'd
A green-slop'd island, figur'd o'er with flow'rs,
And from its centre lifting high to view
A marble chapel, on the massy strength
Of Doric columns rais'd. A full-wrought frieze
Display'd the sculptor's art. In solemn pomp
Of obelisks, and busts, and storied urns,
Sepulchral mansions of illustrious dead
Were scatter'd round, o'ercast with shadows black
Of yew and cypress. In a serious note
Oileus, pointing, opens new discourse—

‘ Beneath yon turf my ancestors repose.
Oilean Ajax singly was depriv'd
Of funeral honours there. With impious lust
He stain'd Minerva's temple. From the gulf
Of briny waters by their god preserv'd,
That god he brav'd. He lies beneath a rock,
By Neptune's trident in his wrath o'erturn'd.
Shut from Elysium for a hundred years,
The hero's ghost bewail'd his oozy tomb.
A race more pious on the' Oilean house
Felicity have drawn. To every god
I owe my bliss, my early fame to Pan.
Once, on the margin of that silent pool,
In their nocturnal camp, Barbarians lay,
Awaiting morn to violate the dead.
My youth was fir'd. I summon'd, from their cots,
A rustic host. We sacrific'd to Pan,
Assail'd the' unguarded ruffians in his name.
He with his terrors smote their yielding hearts.
Not one surviv'd the fury of our swains.

Rich was the pillage. Hence that trophy rose,
Of costly blocks constructed ; hence that fane,
Inscrib'd to Pan the' armipotent. O King !
Be to an old man's vanity benign.
This frowning emblem of terrific war
Proclaims the ardour and exploits of youth.
This, to Barbarian strangers entering Greece,
Shows what I was. The marble fount thou saw'st
Of living water, whose transparent flow
Reliev'd thy march in yester sultry sun,
The cell, which offer'd rest on beds of moss,
Show what I am ; to Grecian neighbours show
The hospitality of age. O age !
Where are thy graces, but in liberal deeds,
In bland deportment ? Would thy furrow'd cheeks
Lose the deformity of time ? Let smiles
Dwell in thy wrinkles. Then, rever'd by youth,
Thy feeble steps will find'—Abruptly here
He paus'd. A manly warrior, full in sight,
Beside the trophy on his target lean'd,
Unknown to Sparta's leader, who address'd
His reverend host—' Thou pausest. Let me ask,
Whom do I see, resembling in his form
A demigod ? In transport then the sage—
' It is my son, discover'd by his shield,
Thy brave auxiliar, Medon ! He sustains
My ancient honours in his native state,
Which kindly chose my offspring to replace
Their long-sequester'd chief. Heart-winning guest !
My life, a tide of joy, which never knew
A painful ebb, beyond its wonted mark
Flows in thy converse. Could a wish prevail,
My long and happy course should finish here.'
The chariot rested. Medon now approach'd,

Saluting thus Leonidas—‘ O king
Of warlike Sparta ! Xerxes’ host in sight
Begin to spread their multitude, and fill
The spacious Malian plain.’ The king replies—
‘ Accept, illustrious messenger, my thanks.
With such a brave assistant, as the son
Of great Oïleus, more assur’d I go
To face those numbers.’ With his godlike friend
The father, now dismounting from his car,
Embraces Medon. In a sliding bark
They all are wafted to the island-fane,
Erected by Oïleus, and enrich’d
With his engrav’d atchievements. Thence the eye
Of Sparta’s general, in extensive scope,
Contemplates each battalion as they wind
Along the pool ; whose limpid face reflects
Their weapons, glistening in the early sun.
Them he to Pan armipotent commends,
His favour thus invoking—‘ God, whose power,
By rumour vain, or echo’s empty voice,
Can sink the valiant in desponding fear,
Can disarray whole armies ; smile on these
Thy worshippers ! Thy own Arcadians guard !
Through thee Oïleus triumph’d. On his Son,
On me, look down. Our shields auxiliar join
Against profane Barbarians, who insult
The Grecian gods, and meditate the fall
Of this thy shrine.’ He said, and now, intent
To leave the island, on Oïleus call’d.

‘ He, (Medon answer’d) by his joy and zeal
Too high transported, and discoursing long,
Felt on his drowsy lids a balmy down
Of heaviness descending. He, unmark’d
Amid thy pious commerce with the god,

Was silently remov'd. The good old chief
On carpets, rais'd by tender, menial hands,
Calm in the secret sanctuary is laid.'

His hastening step Leonidas restrains;
Thus fervent prays—' O Maia's son ! best pleas'd
When calling slumber to a virtuous eye,
Watch o'er my venerable friend ! thy balm
He wants, exhausted by his love to me.
Sweet sleep, thou softenest that intruding pang
Which generous breasts, so parting, must admit.'

He said, embark'd, relanded. To his side
Inviting Medon, he rejoin'd the host.

LEONIDAS.



BOOK III.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas arrives at Thermopylæ about noon, on the fourth day after his departure from the Isthmus. He is received by Demophilus, the commander of Thespia, and by Anaxander the Theban, treacherously recommending Epialtes, a Malian, who seeks, by a pompous description of the Persian power, to intimidate the Grecian leaders as they are viewing the enemy's camp from the top of mount Ceta. He is answered by Dieneces and Diomedon. Xerxes sends Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are dismissed by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon; which last, incensed at the arrogance of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occasions a challenge to single combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes, after a conference with Anaxander, declares his intention of returning to Xerxes. Leonidas dispatches Agis with Melibœus, a faithful slave of Oileus, and high in the estimation of his lord, to view a body of Phocians, who had been posted at a distance from Thermopylæ for the defence of another pass in mount Ceta.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK III.

Now in the van Leonidas appears,
With Medon still conferring. ‘Hast thou heard,
(He said) among the’ innumerable foes,
What chiefs are most distinguish’d?—‘ Might we
trust

To fame, (replied the Locrian) Xerxes boasts
His ablest, bravest, counsellor and chief,
In Artemisia, Caria’s matchless queen.
To old Darius benefits had bound
Her lord, herself to Xerxes. Not compell’d,
Except by magnanimity, she leads
The best appointed squadron of his fleet.
No female softness Artemisia knows,
But in maternal love. Her widow’d hand
With equity and firmness for her Son
Administers the sway. Of Doric race
She still retains the spirit, which from Greece
Her ancestors transplanted. Other chiefs
Are all Barbarians, little known to fame,
Save one, whom Sparta hath herself supplied,
Not less than Demaratus, once her king,
An exile now.’ Leonidas rejoins—

‘Son of Oïleus, like thy father wise,
Like him partake my confidence. Thy words
Recal an era, saddening all my thoughts.

That injur'd Spartan shar'd the regal sway
With one—Alas! my brother, eldest-born,
Unbless'd by nature, favour'd by no god,
Cleomenes! Insanity of mind,
Malignant passions, impious acts deform'd
A life concluded by his own fell hand.
Against his colleague, envious, he suborn'd
Leutychides. Him perjury and fraud
Plac'd on the seat, by Demaratus held
Unstain'd in lustre.' Here Oileus' son—

' My future service only can repay
Thy confidential friendship. Let us close
The gloomy theme. Thermopylæ is nigh.'—
Each face in transport glows. Now Æta rear'd
His towering forehead. With impatient steps
On rush'd the phalanx, sounding pæans high;
As if the present deity of Fame
Had from the summit shown her dazzling form,
With wreaths unfading on her temples bound,
Her adamant trumpet in her hand,
To celebrate their valour. From the van
Leonidas advances, like the sun,
When through dividing clouds his presence stays
Their sweeping rack, and stills the clamorous wind.
The army silent halt. Their ensigns fan
The air no longer. Motionless their spears.
His eye reveals the ardour of his soul,
Which thus find utterance from his eager lips—
' All hail, Thermopylæ, and you, the powers
Presiding here! All hail, ye silvan gods!
Ye fountain-nymphs! who send your lucid rills
In broken murmurs down the rugged steep;
Receive us, O benignant, and support
The cause of Greece! Conceal the secret paths

Which o'er these crags, and through these forests,
wind,

Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone
By your immortal footsteps! O defend
Your own recesses, nor let impious war
Profane the solemn silence of your groves!
Then on your hills your praises shall you hear
From those, whose deeds shall tell the approving
world,

That not to undeservers did ye grant
Your high protection. You, my valiant friends,
Now rouse the generous spirit which inflames
Your hearts; exert the vigour of your arms;
That in the bosoms of the brave and free
Your memorable actions may survive;
May sound delightful in the ear of time,
Long as blue Neptune beats the Malian strand,
Or those tall cliffs erect their shaggy tops
So near to Heaven, your monuments of fame!

As in some torrid region, where the head
Of Ceres bends beneath her golden load,
If from a burning brand a scatter'd spark
Invade the parching ground, a sudden blaze
Sweeps o'er the crackling champaign; through his
host,

Not with less swiftness, to the furthest ranks
The words of great Leonidas diffus'd
A more than mortal fervour. Every heart
Distends with thoughts of glory, such as raise
The patriot's virtue, and the soldier's fire,
When danger most tremendous in his form,
Seems in their sight most lovely. On their minds
Imagination pictures all the scenes

Of war; the purple field, the heaps of dead,
The glittering trophy, pil'd with Persian arms.

But lo! the Grecian leaders, who before
Were stationed near Thermopylæ, salute
Laconia's king. The Thespian chief, allied
To Dithyrambus, first the silence breaks;
An ancient warrior. From behind his casque,
Whose crested weight his aged temples bore,
The slender hairs, all silver'd o'er by time,
Flow'd venerable down. He thus began—

‘ Joy now shall crown the period of my days;
And whether nigh my father's urn I sleep,
Or, slain by Persia's sword, embrace the earth,
Our common parent, be it as the gods
Shall best determine. For the present hour
I bless their bounty, which hath given my age
To see the brave Leonidas, and bid
That hero welcome on this glorious shore,
To fix the basis of the Grecian weal.’

Here too the crafty Anaxander spake—
‘ Of all the Thebans, we, rejoicing, hail
The king of Sparta! We obey'd his call.
O may oblivion o'er the shame of Thebes
A darkening veil extend! or those alone
By fame be curs'd, whose impious counsels turn
Their countrymen from virtue! Thebes was sunk,
Her glory buried in dishonest sloth.
To wake her languor generous Alpheus came,
The messenger of freedom. O accept
Our grateful hearts! Thou, Alpheus, art the cause
That Anaxander from his native gates
Not single joins this host; nor tamely these,
My chosen friends, behind their walls remain.

Enough of words. Time presses. Mount, ye chiefs,
This loftiest part of Cæta. 'This o'erlooks
The straits, and far beyond their northern mouth
Extends our sight across the Malian plain.
Behold a native, Epialtes call'd,
Who with the foe from Thracia's bounds hath
march'd.'

Disguis'd in seeming worth, he ended here.
The camp not long had Epialtes reach'd,
By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
His heart was false and abject. He was skill'd
To grace perfidious counsels, and to clothe
In swelling phrase the baseness of his soul,
Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece,
Himself a Greek, a faithless spy he came.
Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,
The Theban chiefs, and nightly councils held
How to betray the Spartans, or deject
By consternation. Up the arduous slope
With him each leader to the summit climbs:
'Thence a tremendous prospect they command,
Where endless plains, by white pavilions hid,
Spread like the vast Atlantic, when no shore,
No rock, no promontory, stops the sight,
Unbounded, as it wanders; while the moon,
Resplendent eye of night, in fullest orb
Surveys the' interminate expanse, and throws
Her rays abroad, to deck in snowy light
The dancing billows. Such was Xerxes' camp;
A power unrivall'd by the mightiest king,
Or fiercest conqueror, whose blood-thirsty pride,
Dissolving all the sacred ties which bind
The happiness of nations, hath upcall'd
The sleeping fury, Discord, from her den.

Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,
The towers of Memphis, and those pregnant fields
Enrich'd by kindly Nile, such armies swarm'd
Around Sesostris; who with trophies fill'd
The vanquish'd east; who o'er the rapid foam
Of distant Tanais, o'er the surface broad
Of Ganges, sent his formidable name.
Nor yet in Asia's far extended bounds
E'er met such numbers; not when Ninus led
The' Assyrian race to conquest. Not the gates
Of Babylon along Euphrates pour'd
Such myriads arm'd; when, emptying all her streets,
The rage of dire Semiramis they bore
Beyond the Indus; there defeated, left
His blood-stain'd current turbid with their dead.

Yet of the chiefs, contemplating this scene,
Not one is shaken. Undismay'd they stand;
The' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes
They traverse; while, in meditation, near
The treacherous Malian waits, collecting all
His pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r;
Nor yet with falsehood arms his fraudulent tongue
To feign a tale of terror. Truth, herself,
Beyond the reach of fiction to enhance,
Now aids his treason, and with cold dismay
Might pierce the boldest heart, unless secur'd
By dauntless virtue, which disdains to live
From liberty divorc'd. Requested soon,
He breaks his artful silence: 'Greeks and friends,
Can I behold my native Malian fields,
Presenting hostile millions to your sight,
And not in grief suppress the horrid tale
Which you exact from these ill-omen'd lips?
On Thracia's sea-beat verge I watch'd the fogs;

Where, joining Europe to the Asian strand,
A mighty bridge restrain'd the' outrageous waves,
And stemm'd the impetuous current; while in arms
The universal progeny of men
Seem'd trampling o'er the subjugated flood
By thousands, by ten thousands. Persians, Medes,
Assyrians, Saces, Indians, swarthy files
From Æthiopia, Egypt's tawny sons,
Arabians, Bactrians, Parthians, all the strength
Of Asia and of Libya. Neptune groan'd
Beneath their number, and, indignant, heav'd
His neck against the' incumbent weight. In vain
The violence of Eurus and the North,
With rage combin'd, against the' unyielding pile
Dash'd half the Hellespont. The eastern world
Seven days and nights uninterrupted pass
To cover Thracia's regions. They accept
A Persian lord. They range their hardy race
Beneath his standards. Macedonia's youth,
The brave Thessalian horse, with every Greek
Who dwells beyond Thermopylæ, attend,
Assist a foreign tyrant. Sire of gods!
Who in a moment, by thy will supreme,
Canst quell the mighty in their proudest hopes,
Canst raise the weak to safety, oh impart
Thy instant succour! Interpose thy arm!
With lightning blast their standards! Oh, confound,
With triple-bolted thunder, Asia's tents,
Whence rushing millions by the morn will pour
An inundation to o'erwhelm the Greeks!
Resistance else were vain, against a host
Which overspreads Thessalia. Far beyond
That Malian champaign, stretching wide below,
Beyond the utmost measure of the sight

From this aspiring cliff, the hostile camp
Contains yet mightier numbers; who have drain'd
The beds of copious rivers with their thirst;
Who with their arrows hide the mid-day sun.'

'Then we shall give them battle in the shade;'
Dieneces replied. Not calmly thus
Diomedon. On Persia's camp he bent
His lowering brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,
Then fierce exclaim'd—'Bellona! turn, and view
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal stage
By regal madness for thy rage prepar'd
To exercise its horrors! Whet thy teeth,
Voracious death! All Asia is thy prey.
Contagion, famine, and the Grecian sword,
For thy insatiate hunger will provide
Variety of carnage.' He concludes:
While on the host immense his cloudy brow
Is fix'd, disdainful, and their strength defies.

Meantime, an eastern herald down the pass
Was seen, slow-moving tow'ards the Phocian wall.
From Asia's monarch delegated, came
Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hill
Leonidas conducts the impatient chiefs.
By them environ'd, in his tent he sits;
Where thus Tigranes their attention calls—

'Ambassadors from Persia's king, we stand
Before you, Grecians! To display the pow'r
Of our great master were a needless task.
The name of Xerxes, Asia's mighty lord,
Invincible, exalted on a throne
Surpassing human lustre, must have reach'd
To every clime, and every heart impress'd
With awe and low submission. Yet I swear,
By yon refulgent orb which flames above,

The glorious symbol of eternal pow'r,
This military throng, this show of war,
Well nigh persuade me you have never heard
That name, at whose commanding sound the banks
Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,
The' Egyptian flood, the Hellespontic surge,
Obedient roll. O impotent and rash!
Whom yet the large beneficence of Heaven,
And heavenly Xerxes, merciful and kind,
Deign to preserve; resign your arms! Disperse
All to your cities! There let humblest hands
With earth and water greet your destin'd lord.

As through the' extensive grove, whose leafy
boughs,
Entwining, crown some eminence with shade;
The tempests rush sonorous, and between
The crashing branches roar: by fierce disdain,
By indignation, thus the Grecians, rous'd,
In loudest clamour close the Persian's speech.
But every tongue was hush'd, when Sparta's king
This brief reply deliver'd from his seat—

' O Persian! when to Xerxes thou return'st,
Say thou hast told the wonders of his pow'r.
Then say, thou saw'st a slender band of Greece,
Which dares his boasted millions to the field.'

He adds no more. The' ambassadors retire.
Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines
Diomedon and Thespia's youth conduct.
In slow solemnity they all proceed,
And sullen silence; but their looks denote
Far more than speech could utter. Wrath contracts
The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth
Gnash with impatience of delay'd revenge.
Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd

The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face
Of either Persian, arrogance, incens'd
By disappointment, lour'd. The utmost strait
They now attain'd, which open'd on the tents
Of Asia, there discovering wide to view
Her deep, immense arrangement. Then the heart
Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the sight,
Thus overflows in loud and haughty phrase—

‘ O Arimanius! origin of ill,
Have we demanded of thy ruthless pow'r,
Thus with the curse of madness to afflict
These wretched men? But, since thy dreadful ire
To irresistible perdition dooms
The Grecian race, we vainly should oppose.
Be thy dire will accomplish'd. Let them fall;
Their native soil be fatten'd with their blood.’

Enrag'd the stern Diomedon replies—
‘ Thou base dependant on a lawless king,
Thou purple slave, thou boaster, dost thou know,
That I beheld the Marathonian field?
Where, like the Libyan sands before the wind,
Your host was scatter'd by Athenian spears?
Where thou, perhaps by ignominious flight,
Didst from this arm protect thy shivering limbs?
O let me find thee in to-morrow's fight!
Along this rocky pavement shalt thou lie,
To dogs a banquet.’—With uplifted palms,
Tigranes then—‘ Omnipotent support
Of sceptred Xerxes, Horomazes, hear!
To thee his first victorious fruits of war
Thy worshipper devotes, the gory spoils,
Which from this Grecian, by the rising dawn,
In sight of either host, my strength shall rend.’

At length Phraortes, interposing, spake—

‘ I too would find, among the Grecian chiefs,
One who in battle dares abide my lance.’

The gallant youth of Thespia swift replied—

‘ Thou look’st on me, O Persian! Worthier far
Thou might’st have singled from the ranks of Greece;
Not one more willing, to essay thy force.

Yes, I will prove, before the eye of Mars,
How far the prowess of her meanest chief
Beyond thy vaunts deserves the palm of fame.’

This said, the Persians to their king repair:
Back to their camp the Grecians. There they find
Each soldier poising his extended spear,
His weighty buckler bracing on his arm,
In warlike preparation. Through the files
Each leader, moving vigilant, by praise,
By exhortation, aids their native warmth.
Alone the Theban Anaxander pin’d,
Who thus apart his Malian friend bespake—

‘ What has thy lofty eloquence avail’d,
Alas! in vain attempting to confound
The Spartan valour? With redoubled fires,
See how their bosoms glow. They wish to die;
They wait impatient for the’ unequal fight.
Too soon the’ insuperable foes will spread
Promiscuous havoc round, and Thebans share
The doom of Spartans. Through the guarded pass
Who will adventure Asia’s camp to reach
In our behalf? that Xerxes may be warn’d
To spare his friends amid the general wreck;
When his high-sworn resentment, like a flood
Increas’d by stormy showers, shall cover Greece
With desolation.’ Epialtes here—

‘ Whence, Anaxander, this unjust despair?
Is there a path on Cæta’s hills unknown

To Epialtes? Over trackless rocks,
Through mazy woods, my secret steps can pass.
Farewell! I go. Thy merit shall be told
To Persia's king. Thou only watch the hour;
When wanted most, thy ready succour lend.'

Meantime a weary, comprehensive care,
To every part Leonidas extends;
As in the human frame through every vein,
And artery minute, the ruling heart
Its vital powers disperses. In his tent
The prudent chief of Locris he consults;
He summons Melibœus by the voice
Of Agis. In humility not mean,
By no unseemly ignorance depress'd,
The' ingenuous swain, by all the' illustrious house
Of Ajax honour'd, bows before the king,
Who gracious spake—' The confidence bestow'd,
The praise by sage Oïleus might suffice
To verify thy worth. Myself have watch'd,
Have found thee skilful, active, and discreet.
Thou know'st the region round. With Agis go,
'The upper straits, the Phocian camp, explore.'

' O condescension! (Melibœus then)
More ornamental to the great than gems,
A purple robe, or diadem! The king
Accepts my service. Pleasing is my task.
Spare not thy servant. Exercise my zeal.
Oïleus will rejoice, and, smiling, say
An humble hand may smooth a hero's path.'

He leads the way, while Agis, following, spake—
' O swain, distinguish'd by a liberal mind,
Who were thy parents? Where thy place of birth?
What chance depriv'd thee of a father's house?
Oïleus sure thy liberty would grant,

Or Sparta's king solicit for that grace ;
When in a station equal to thy worth
Thou may'st be rank'd.' The prudent hind began—
‘ In different stations different virtues dwell,
All reaping different benefits. The great
In dignity and honours meet reward,
For acts of bounty and heroic toils.
A servant's merit is obedience, truth,
Fidelity; his recompense, content.
Be not offended at my words, O chief!
They, who are free, with envy may behold
This bondman of Oileus. To his trust,
His love exalted, I by nature's pow'r,
From his pure model, could not fail to mould
What thou entitlest ‘ liberal.’ Whence I came,
Or who my parents, is to me unknown.
In childhood seiz'd by robbers, I was sold :
They took their price; they hush'd the' atrocious
deed.

Dear to Oileus and his race, I thrive;
And, whether noble or ignoble born,
I am contented, studious of their love
Alone. Ye sons of Sparta! I admire
Your acts, your spirit, but confine my own
To their condition; happy in my lord,
Himself of men most happy.’ Agis bland
Rejoins: ‘ O born with talents to become
A lot more noble, which, by thee refus'd,
Thou dost the more deserve! Laconia's king
Discerns thy merit through its modest veil.
Consummate prudence in thy words I hear.
Long may contentment, justly priz'd, be thine!
But, should the state demand thee, I foresee

Thou wouldst, like others, in the field excel,
Wouldst share in glory.' Blithe return'd the swain—

‘Not every service is confin'd to arms.
Thou shalt behold me in my present state
Not useless. If the charge Oïleus gave,
I can accomplish; meriting his praise
And thy esteem, my glory will be full.’

Both pleas'd, in converse thus pursue their way,
Where Cæta lifts her summits huge to heav'n
In rocks abrupt, pyramidal, or tower'd,
Like castles. Sudden from a tufted crag,
Where goats are browsing, Melibæus hears
A call of welcome. There his course he stays.

LEONIDAS.



BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find seated on a throne, surrounded by his satraps, in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi stand before him, and sing a hymn, containing the religion of Zoroastres. Xerxes, notwithstanding the arguments of his brothers, Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambassadors, who report that the Grecians are determined to maintain the pass against him; but, by the advice of Artemisia, the queen of Caria, ascends his chariot, to take a view of the Grecians himself, and commands Demaratus, an exiled king of Sparta, to attend him. He passes through the midst of his army, consisting of many nations, differing in arms, customs, and manners. He advances to the entrance of the straits, and, surprised at the behaviour of the Spartans, demands the reason of it from Demaratus: which occasions a conversation between them, on the mercenary forces of Persia and the militia of Greece. Demaratus, weeping at the sight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes, still incredulous, commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Grecians bound before him the next day, and retires to his pavilion. Artemisia remains behind with her son, and communicates to Hyperanthes her apprehensions of a defeat at Thermopylæ. She takes an accurate view of the pass, chooses a convenient place for an ambuscade, and, on her departure to the Persian camp, is surprised by a reproof from a woman of an awful appearance on a cliff of mount Ceta.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

THE plain beyond Thermopylæ is girt
Half round by mountains, half by Neptune lav'd.
The arduous ridge is broken deep in clefts,
Which open channels to pellucid streams,
In rapid flow sonorous. Chief in fame,
Spercheos, boasting once his poplars tall,
Foams down a stony bed. Throughout the face
Of this broad champaign, numberless, are pitch'd
Barbarian tents. Along the winding flood
To rich Thessalia's confines they extend.
They fill the vallies, late profusely bless'd
In nature's varied beauties. Hostile spears
Now bristle horrid through her languid shrubs.
Pale die her flowrets under barbarous feet.
Embracing ivy from its rock is torn.
The lawn, dismantled of its verdure, fades.
The poplar groves, uprooted from the banks,
Leave desolate the stream. Elaborate domes,
To heaven devoted in recesses green,
Had felt rude force, insensible and blind
To elegance and art. The statues, busts,
The figur'd vases, mutilated, lie,
With chisel'd columns, their engraven frieze,
Their architrave and cornice, all disjoin'd.

Yet, unpolluted, is a part reserv'd
In this deep vale, a patrimonial spot
Of Aleuadian princes, who, allies
To Xerxes, reign'd in Thessaly. There glow
Inviolatè the shrubs. There branch the trees,
Sons of the forest. Over downy moss
Smooth walks and fragrant, lucid here and broad,
There clos'd in myrtle under woodbine-roofs,
Wind to retreats delectable, to grotts,
To silvan structures, bowers, and cooling dells,
Enliven'd all, and musical, with birds
Of vocal sweetness, in relucènt plumes
Innumèrably various. Lulling falls
Of liquid crystal, from perennial founts,
Attune their pebbled channels. Here the queen,
The noble dames of Persia; here the train
Of royal infants, each with eunuch guards,
In rich pavilions, dazzling to the sight,
Possess'd, remote from onset and surprise,
A tranquil station. Ariana here,
Ill-destin'd princess, from Darius sprung,
Hangs, undelighted, o'er melodious rills
Her drooping forehead. Love-afflicted fair!
All inharmonious are the feather'd choirs
To her sad ear. From flowers and florid plants,
To her the breezes, wafting fresh perfumes,
Transmit no pleasure. Sedulous in vain,
Her tender slaves, in harmony, with lutes
Of soothing sound, their warbled voices blend
To charm her sadness. This, the precious part
Of Asia's camp, Artuchus holds in charge;
A satrap, long experienc'd, who presides
O'er all the regal palaces. High rank'd,
Bold, resolute, and faithful, he commands

The whole Sperchean vale. In prospect rise
The distant navy, dancing on the foam,
The' unbounded camp, enveloping the plain,
With Xerxes' tent, august in structure, plac'd
A central object, to attract the eyes
Of subject millions: thither now resort
Tigranes and Phraortes. Him they find
Enclos'd by princes, by illustrious chiefs,
The potentates of Asia. Near his side
Abrocomes and Hyperanthes wait,
His gallant brothers; with Mazæus brave,
Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords!
Their sceptred master from his radiant seat
Looks down, imperious. So the stately tower
Of Belus, mingling its majestic brow
With heaven's bright azure, from on high survey'd
The huge extent of Babylon, with all
Her sumptuous domes and palaces beneath.
This day his banners to unfurl in Greece
The monarch's will decides; but first ordains
That grateful hymns should celebrate the name
Of Horomazes: so the Persians call'd
The world's great author. Rob'd in purest white,
The Magi rang'd before the' unfolded tent.
Fire blaz'd beside them. Tow'rd the sacred flame
They turn'd, and sent their tuneful praise to heaven.

From Zoroastres was the song deriv'd,
Who on the hills of Persia, from his cave,
By flowers environ'd, and melodious founts,
Which sooth'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd
How Horomazes, radiant source of good,
Original, immortal, fram'd the globe
In fruitfulness and beauty: how with stars
By him the heavens were spangled: how the sun,

Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light
And genial warmth, whence teeming Nature smiles,
Burst from the east at his creating voice;
When, straight beyond the golden verge of day,
Night show'd the horrors of her distant reign,
Where black and hateful Arimanius frown'd,
The author foul of evil: how with shades
From his dire mansion he deform'd the works
Of Horomazes: turn'd to noxious heat
The solar beam, that foodful earth might parch;
That streams, exhaling, might forsake their beds;
Whence pestilence and famine: how the power
Of Horomazes in the human breast
Benevolence and equity infus'd,
Truth, temperance, and wisdom, sprung from
heaven:

When Arimanius blacken'd all the soul
With falsehood and injustice, with desires
Insatiable, with violence and rage,
Malignity and folly. If the hand
Of Horomazes on precarious life
Sheds wealth and pleasure, swift the' infernal god,
With wild access or avarice, blasts the joy.
Thou, Horomazes, victory dost give.
By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd.
Great Xerxes owns thy succour. When in storms
The hate of direful Arimanius swell'd
The Hellespont, thou o'er its chafing breast
The destin'd master of the world didst lead,
This day his promis'd glories to enjoy:
When Greece affrighted to his arm shall bend;
Ev'n as at last shall Arimanius fall
Before thy might, and evil be no more.

The Magi ceas'd their harmony. Behold,

From her tall ship, between a double row
Of naval warriors, while a golden ray
Shoots from her standard, Artemisia lands.
In her enrich'd accoutrements of war,
The full-wrought buckler and high-crested helm,
In Caria first devis'd, across the beach
Her towering form advances. So the pine,
From Taurus hewn, mature in spiry pride,
Now by the sailor, in its canvass wings,
Voluminous, and dazzling pendants dress'd,
On Artemisia's own imperial deck
Is seen to rise, and overtop the grove
Of crowded masts surrounding. In her heart
Deep scorn of courtly counsellors she bore,
Who fill with impious vanity their king;
As when he lash'd the Hellespont with rods,
Amid the billows cast a golden chain
To fetter Neptune. Yet her brow severe
Unbent its rigour often, as she glanc'd
On her young son, who, pacing near in arms
Of Carian guise, proportion'd to his years,
Look'd up, and waken'd, by repeated smiles,
Maternal fondness, melting in that eye
Which scould on purpled flatterers. Her seat
At the right hand of Xerxes she assumes,
Invited; while in adoration bow'd
Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay:
Across their foreheads spread their servile palms,
As from a present deity, too bright
For mortal vision, to conceal their eyes.
At length, in abject phrase, Tigranes thus—
‘ O Xerxes, live for ever! Gracious lord,
Who dost permit thy servants to approach
Thy awful sight, and prostrate to confess

Thy majesty and radiance ! May the power
Of Horomazes stretch thy regal arm
O'er endless nations, from the Indian shores
To those wide floods which beat Iberian strands,
From northern Tanais to the source of Nile !
Still from thy head may Arimanius bend
Against thy foes his malice ! Yonder Greeks,
Already smit with frenzy by his wrath,
Reject thy proffer'd clemency. They choose
To magnify thy glory by their fall.'

The monarch, turning to his brothers, spake—
' Say, Hyperanthes, can thy soul believe
These tidings ? Sure these slaves have never dar'd
To face the Grecians, but delude our ears
With base impostures, which their fear suggests.'

He frown'd, and Hyperanthes calm replied—
' O from his servants may the king avert
His indignation ! Greece was fam'd of old
For martial spirit and a dauntless breed.
I once have tried their valour. To my words
Abrocomes can witness. When thy sire
And ours, Darius, to Athenian shores,
With Artaphernes brave and Datis, sent
Our tender youth, at Marathon we found
How weak the hope that numbers could dismay
A foe, resolv'd on victory or death.
Yet not as one contemptible, or base,
Let me appear before thee. Though the Greeks
With such persisting courage be endued,
Soon as the king shall summon to the field,
He shall behold me in the dangerous van
Exalt my spear, and pierce the hostile ranks,
Or sink beneath them.' Xerxes swift rejoind—
' Why over Asia, and the Libyan soil,

With all their nations, doth my potent arm
Extend its sceptre? Wherefore do I sweep
Across the earth with millions in my train?
Why shade the ocean with unnumber'd sails?
Why all this power, unless the' Almighty's will
Decreed one master to the subject-world;
And that the earth's extremity alone
Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd
The Nile's revolted sons, enlarg'd my sway
With sandy Libya, and the sultry clime
Of Æthiopia. He for this subdued
The Hellespontic foam, and taught the sea
Obedience to my nod. Then dream no more
That heaven, deserting my imperial cause,
With conrage more than human will inspire
Yon despicable Grecians, and expunge
The common fears of nature from their breasts.'

The monarch ceas'd. Abrocomes began—
'The king commands us to reveal our thoughts.
Incredulous he hears. But time and truth
Not Horomazes can arrest. Thy beams
To instant lightning, Mythra, mayst thou change
For my destruction; may the' offended king
Frown on his servant; cast a loathing eye,
If the assertion of my lips be false:
Our further march those Grecians will oppose.'

Amid the' encircling peers Argestes sat,
A potent prince. O'er Sipylus he reign'd,
Whose verdant summits overlook'd the waves
Of Hermus and Pactolus. Either stream,
Enrich'd hy golden sands, a tribute pay'd
To this great satrap. Through the servile court
Yet none was found more practis'd in the arts

Of mean submission ; none more skill'd to gain
The royal favour ; none who better knew
The phrase, the look, the gesture, of a slave ;
None more detesting Artemisia's worth ;
By her none more despis'd. His master's eye
He caught, then spake—' Display thy dazzling
state,

Thou deity of Asia ! Greece will hide
Before thy presence her dejected face.'

Last Artemisia, rising stern, began—
' Why sits the lord of Asia in his tent,
Unprofitably wasting precious hours
In vain discussion, whether yonder Greeks,
Rang'd in defence of that important pass,
Will fight or fly? a question by the sword
To be decided. Still to narrow straits,
By land, by sea, thy council hath confin'd
Each enterprise of war. In numbers weak,
Twice have the' Athenians in Eubœa's frith
Repuls'd thy navy. But, whate'er thy will,
Be it enforc'd by vigour. Let the king
The difference see, by trial in the field,
Between smooth sound and valour. Then dissolve
These impotent debates. Ascend thy car.
The future stage of war thyself explore:
Behind thee leave the vanity of hope,
That such a foe to splendour will submit,
Whom steel, not gold, must vanquish. Thou
provide
Thy mail, Argestes. Not in silken robes,
Not as in council with an oily tongue,
But spear to spear, and clanging shield to shield,
Thou soon must grapple on a field of blood.'

The king arose : ' No more ! Prepare my car.
The Spartan exile, Demaratus, call.
We will ourselves advance to view the foe.'

The monarch will'd, and suddenly he heard
His trampling horses. High on silver wheels
The ivory-car with azure sapphires shone,
Cærulean beryls, and the jasper green,
The emerald, the ruby's glowing blush,
The flaming topaz with its golden beam,
The pearl, the' empurpled amethyst, and all
The various gems, which India's mines afford
To deck the pomp of kings. In burnish'd gold
A sculptur'd eagle from behind display'd
His stately neck, and o'er the royal head
Outstretch'd his dazzling wings. Eight generous
steeds,

Which on the fam'd Nisæan plain were nurs'd
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.
Not those of old to Hercules refus'd
By false Laomedon ; nor they which bore
The son of Thetis through the scatter'd rear
Of Troy's devoted race, with these might vie
In strength or beauty. In obedient pride
They hear their lord. Exulting, in the air
They toss their foreheads. On their glistening
chests

The silver manes disport. The king ascends.
Beside his footstool Demaratus sits.
The charioteer now shakes the' effulgent reins
Strong Patiramplies. At the signal, bound
The' attentive steeds ; the chariot flies ; behind,
Ten thousand horse in thunder sweep the field,
Down to the sea-beat margin, on a plain
Of vast expansion, in battalia wait

The eastern bands. To these the' imperial wheels,
By princes follow'd in a hundred cars,
Proceed. The queen of Caria and her son
With Hyperanthes rode. The king's approach
Swift through the wide arrangement is proclaim'd.
He now draws nigh. The' innumerable host
Roll back by nations, and admit their lord,
With all his satraps. As from crystal domes,
Built underneath an arch of pendant seas,
When that stern power, whose trident rules the
floods,

With each cerulean deity ascends,
Thron'd in his pearly chariot, all the deep
Divides its bosom to the' emerging god:
So Xerxes rode between the Asian world,
On either side receding: when, as down
The' immeasurable ranks his sight was lost,
A momentary gloom o'ercast his mind,
While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears;
That, soon as time a hundred years had told,
Not one among those millions should survive!
Whence to obscure thy pride arose that cloud?
Was it that once humanity could touch
A tyrant's breast? Or rather, did thy soul
Repine, O Xerxes! at the bitter thought
That all thy power was mortal?—But the veil
Of sadness soon forsook his brightening eye,
As with adoring awe those millions bow'd,
And to his heart relentless pride recall'd.
Elate, the mingled prospect he surveys
Of glittering files, unnumber'd; chariots, scyth'd,
On thundering axles roll'd; and haughty steeds,
In sumptuous trappings clad: Barbaric pomp!
While gorgeous banners to the sun expand

Their streaming volumes of relucant gold,
Pre-eminent, amidst tiaras gemm'd,
Engraven helmets, shields emboss'd, and spears
In number equal to the bladed grass,
Whose living green in vernal beauty clothes
Thessalia's vale. What powers of sounding verse
Can to the mind present the' amazing scene?
Not thee, whom rumour's fabling voice delights,
Poetic fancy, to my aid I call;
But thou, historic truth, support my song,
Which shall the various multitude display,
Their arms, their manners, and their native seats.

The Persians first in scaly corselets shone;
A generous nation, worthy to enjoy
The liberty their injur'd fathers lost,
Whose arms for Cyrus overturn'd the strength
Of Babylon and Sardis. Power advanc'd
The victor's head above his country's laws.
Their tongues were practis'd in the words of truth;
Their limbs inur'd to every manly toil,
To brace the bow, to rule the' impetuous steed,
To dart the javelin; but, untaught to form
The ranks of war, with unconnected force,
With ineffectual fortitude, they rush'd,
As on a fence of adamant, to pierce
The' indissoluble phalanx. Lances short,
And osier-woven targets, they oppos'd
To weighty Grecian spears, and massy shields.
On every head tiaras rose like towers,
Impenetrable. With golden gloss
Blaz'd their gay sandals, and the floating reins
Of each proud courser. Daggers on their thighs,
Well-furnish'd quivers, on their shoulders, hung;
And strongest bows of mighty size they bore.

Resembling these in arms, the Medes are seen,
The Cissians and Hyrcanians. Media once
From her bleak mountains aw'd the subject East.
Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd.
The Cissians march'd from Susa's regal walls,
From sultry fields, o'erspread with branching palms,
And white with lilies, water'd by the floods
Of fam'd Choaspes. His transparent wave
The costly goblet wafts to Persia's kings.
All other streams the royal lip disdains.
Hyrcania's race forsook their fruitful clime,
Dark in the shadows of expanding oaks,
To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn,
Bent by its foodful burdens, sheds, unreap'd,
Its plenteous seed, impregnating the soil
With future harvests; whilst in every wood
Their precious labours on the loaden boughs
The honey'd swarms pursue. Assyria's sons
Display their brazen casques, unskilful work
Of rude Barbarians. Each sustains a mace,
O'erlaid with iron. Near Euphrates' banks,
Within the mighty Babylonian gates,
They dwell; and where still mightier once in sway,
Old Ninus rear'd its head, the' imperial seat
Of eldest tyrants. These Chaldæa joins,
The land of shepherds. From the pastures wide
There Belus first discern'd the various course
Of heaven's bright planets, and the clustering stars,
With names distinguish'd; whence himself was
deem'd
The first of gods. His sky-ascending fane
In Babylon the proud Assyrians rais'd.
Drawn from the bounteous soil, by Ochus lav'd,
The Bactrians stood, and, rough in skins of goats,

The Paricanian archers, Caspian ranks,
From barren mountains, from the joyless coast
Around the stormy lake, whose name they bore,
Their scimitars upheld, and cany bows.
The Indian tribes a threefold host compose.
Part guide the courser, part the rapid car;
The rest on foot within the bending cane,
For slaughter, fix the iron-pointed reed.
They, o'er the Indus from the distant verge
Of Ganges passing, left a region, lov'd
By lavish nature. There the season bland
Bestows a double harvest. Honey'd shrubs,
The cinnamon, the spikenard, bless their fields.
Array'd in native wealth, each warrior shines.
His ears bright-beaming pendants grace; his hands,
Encircled, wear a bracelet, starr'd with gems.
Such were the nations who to Xerxes sent
Their mingled aids of infantry and horse.

Now, Muse, recite what multitudes obscur'd
The plain on foot, or elevated high,
On martial axles or on camels, beat
The loosen'd mould. The Parthians first appear,
Then weak in numbers, from unfruitful hills,
From woods, nor yet for warlike steeds renown'd.
Near them the Sodgians, Dadices, arrange,
Gandarians and Chorasmians. Sacian throngs
From cold Iamus pour'd, from Oxus' wave,
From Cyra, built on Iaxartes' brink,
A bound of Persia's empire. Wild, untam'd,
To fury prone, their deserts they forsook.
A bow, a falchion, and a ponderous axe,
The savage legions arm'd. A pointed casque
O'er each grim visage rear'd an iron cone.
In arms like Persians, the Saranges stood.

High as their knees, the shapely buskins clung
Around their legs. Magnificent they trod,
In garments richly tinctur'd, Next are seen
The Pactiau, Mycian, and the Utian train,
In skins of goats rude vested. ' But in spoils
Of tawny lions, and of spotted pards,
The graceful range of Æthiopians shows
An equal stature, and a beauteous frame.
Their torrid region had imbrown'd their cheeks,
And curl'd their jetty locks. In ancient song
Renown'd for justice, riches they disdain'd,
As foes to virtue. From their seat remote,
On Nilus' verge above the' Egyptian bound,
Forc'd by their king's malignity and pride,
These friends of hospitality and peace,
Themselves uninjur'd, wage reluctant war
Against a land, whose climate and whose name
To them were strange. With hardest stone they
point

The rapid arrow. Bows four cubits long,
Form'd of elastic branches from the palm,
They carry, knotted clubs, and lances, arm'd
With horns of goats. The Paphlagonians march'd
From where Carambis, with projected brows,
O'erlooks the dusky Euxin, wrapt in mists ;
From where, through flowers which paint his varied
banks,

Parthenius flows. The Ligyan bands succeed ;
The Matienians, Mariandenians, next ;
To them the Syrian multitudes, who range
Among the cedars on the shaded ridge
Of Libanus ; who cultivate the glebe,
Wide-water'd by Orontes ; who reside
Near Daphne's grove, or pluck from loaded palms

The foodful date, which clusters on the plains
Of rich Damascus. All, who bear the name
Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,
With those who gather from the fragrant shrub
The aromatic balsam, and extract
Its milky juice along the lovely side
Of Jordan, winding, till immers'd he sleeps
Beneath a pitchy surface, which obscures
The' Asphaltic pool. The Phrygians then advance ;
To them their ancient colony are join'd,
Armenia's sons. These see the gushing founts
Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,
Then, wide in lakes expanding, hide the plain ;
Whence, with collected waters, fierce and deep,
His passage rending through diminish'd rocks,
To Babylon he foams. Not so the stream
Of soft Araxes to the Caspian glides ;
He, stealing imperceptibly, sustains
The green profusion of Armenia's meads.

Now, strange to view, in similar attire,
But far unlike in manners, to the Greeks,
Appear the Lydians. Wantonness and sport
Were all their care. Beside C  yster's brink,
Or smooth M  ander, winding silent by ;
Beside Pactolean waves, among the vines
Of Tmolus rising, or the wealthy tide
Of golden-sanded Hermus, they allure
The sight enchanted by the graceful dance ;
Or with melodious sweetness charm the air,
And melt to softest languishment the soul.
What to the field of danger could incite
These tender sons of luxury ? The lash
Of their fell Sovereign drove their shivering backs
Through hail and tempest, which enrag'd the main

And shook beneath their trembling steps the pile,
Conjoining Asia and the western world.
To them Mæonia, hot with sulphurous mines,
Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields,
Unbless'd by verdure. Ashes hide the soil;
Black are the rocks; and every hill deform'd
By conflagration. Helmets press their brows :
Two darts they brandish. On their woolly vests
A swort is girt; and hairy hides compose
Their bucklers round and small. The Mysians left
Olympus wood-envelop'd; left the meads
Wash'd by Caïcus, and the baneful tide
Of Lycus, nurse to serpents. Next advance
An ancient nation, who in early times,
By Trojan arms assail'd, their native land
Esteem'd less dear than freedom, and exchang'd
Their seat on Strymon, where in Thrace he pours
A freezing current, for the distant flood
Of fishy Sangar. These, Bithynians nam'd,
Their habitation to the sacred feet
Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan
Beneath oppression, and their freedom mourn
On Sangar now, as once on Strymon, lost.
The ruddy skins of foxes cloth'd their heads.
Their shields were fashion'd like the horned moon.
A vest embrac'd their bodies; while abroad,
Ting'd with unnumber'd hues, a mantle flow'd.
But other Thracians, who their former name
Retain'd in Asia, fulgent morions wore,
With horns of bulls, in imitating brass,
Curv'd o'er the crested ridge. Phœnician cloth
Their legs infolded. Wont to chase the wolf,
A hunter's spear they grasp'd. What nations still
On either side of Xerxes, while he pass'd,

Their huge array discovering, swell his soul
With more than mortal pride? The cluster'd bands
Of Moschians and Macronians now appear;
The Mosynœcians, who, on berries fed,
In wooden towers along the Pontic sands
Repose their painted limbs. The mirthful race
Of Tibarenians next, whose careless minds
Delight in play and laughter. Then advance,
In garments buckled on their spacious chests,
A people destin'd in eternal verse,
Ev'n thine, sublime Mæonides, to live.
These are the Milyans; Solymi their name
In thy celestial strains; Pisidia's hills
Their dwelling. Once a formidable train,
They fac'd the strong Bellerophon in war:
Now, doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,
Themselves unnerv'd by thralldom, they must leave
Their putrid bodies to the dogs of Greece.
The Marians follow. Next is Aria's host,
Drawn from a region horrid all in thorn,
A dreary waste of sands, which mock the toil
Of patient culture; save one favour'd spot,
Which from the wild emerges like an isle,
Attir'd in verdure, interspers'd with vines
Of generous nurture, yielding juice which scorns
The injuries of time: yet nature's hand
Had sown their rocks with coral; had enrich'd
Their desart-hills with veins of sapphires blue,
Which on the turban shine. On every neck
The coral blushes through the numerous throng.
The Allarodians, and Sasperian bands,
Equipp'd like Colchians, wield a falchion small.
Their heads are guarded by a helm of wood;
Their lances short; of hides undress'd their shields

The Colchians march'd from Phasis ; from the strand
Where once Medea, fair enchantress, stood,
And, wondering, view'd the first adventrous keel
Which cut the Pontic foam. From Argo's side
The demigods descended. They repair'd
To her fell sire's inhospitable hall.

His blooming graces Jason there disclos'd :
With every art of eloquence divine
He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard ;
She gaz'd in fatal ravishment, and lov'd :
Then to the hero she resigns her heart.
Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls.
She lulls the sleepless dragon: O'er the main
He wafts the golden prize, and generous Fair,
The destin'd victim of his treacherous vows !
The hostile Colchians then pursued their flight
In vain. By ancient enmity inflam'd,
Or to recall the long-forgotten wrong,
Compell'd by Xerxes, now they menace Greece
With desolation. Next, in Median garb
A crowd appear'd, who left the peopled isles
In Persia's gulf, and round Arabia strewn.
Some in their native topaz were adorn'd,
From Ophiodes, from Topazos sprung ;
Some in the shells of tortoises, which brood
Around Casitis' verge. For battle range
Those who reside where, all beset with palms,
Erythras lies entomb'd a potent king,
Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.
On chariots scyth'd the Libyans sat, array'd
In skins terrific, brandishing their darts
Of wood, well-temper'd in the hardening flames.
Not Libya's deserts from tyrannic sway
Could hide her sons ; much less could freedom dwell

Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields ;
Where spicy Cassia, where the fragrant reed,
Where myrrh and hallow'd frankincense, perfume
The zephyr's wing. A bow of largest size
The' Arabian carries : o'er his lucid vest
Loose floats a mantle, on his shoulder clasp'd.
Two chosen myriads on the lofty backs
Of camels rode, who match'd the fleetest horse.

Such were the numbers which, from Asia led,
In base prostration bow'd before the wheels
Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more
The Malian sand o'ershadow ? Forward rolls
The regal car through nations, who in arms,
In order'd ranks, unlike the orient tribes,
Upheld the spear and buckler. But, untaught
To bend the servile knee, erect they stood ;
Unless that, mourning o'er the shameful weight
Of their new bondage, some their brows depress'd,
Their arms with grief distaining. Europe's sons
Were these, whom Xerxes by resistless force
Had gather'd round his standards. Murmuring
here,

The sons of Thrace and Macedonia rang'd ;
Here, on his steed, the brave Thessalian frown'd ;
There pin'd reluctant multitudes of Greece,
Redundant plants, in colonies dispers'd
Between Byzantium and the Malian bay.

Through all the nations, who ador'd his pride
Or fear'd his power, the monarch now was pass'd ;
Nor yet among those millions could be found
One, who in beauteous features might compare,
Or towering size, with Xerxes. O ! possess'd
Of all but virtue, doom'd to show how mean,
How weak, without her is unbounded power !

The charm of beauty, and the blaze of state,
How insecure of happiness! how vain!
Thou, who couldst mourn the common lot, by
heaven

From none withheld, which oft to thousands proves
Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage;
Which in consuming sickness, age, or pain,
Becomes at last a soothing hope to all:
Thou, who couldst weep that Nature's gentle hand
Should lay her wearied offspring in the tomb;
Yet couldst remorseless, from their peaceful seats
Lead half the nations, victims to thy pride,
To famine, plague, and massacre a prey;
What didst thou merit from the injur'd world?
What sufferings, to compensate for the tears
Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms,
For all this waste of nature? On his host
The' exulting monarch bends his haughty sight,
To Demaratus then directs his voice—

‘ My father, great Darius, to thy mind
Recall, O Spartan! Gracious he receiv'd
Thy wandering steps, expell'd their native home.
My favour too remember. To beguile
Thy benefactor, and disfigure truth,
Would ill become thee. With considerate eyes
Look back on these battalions. Now declare
If yonder Grecians will oppose their march.’

To him the exile—‘ Deem not, mighty lord,
I will deceive thy goodness by a tale,
To give them glory who degraded mine.
Nor be the king offended while I use
The voice of truth: the Spartans never fly.’

Contemptuous smil'd the monarch, and resum'd—
‘ Wilt thou, in Lacedæmon once supreme,

Encounter twenty Persians? Yet these Greeks
In greater disproportion must engage
Our host to-morrow.' Demaratus then—

‘ By single combat were the trial vain
To show the power of well-united force,
Which oft by military skill surmounts
The weight of numbers. Prince, the difference learn
Between thy warriors and the sons of Greece.
The flower, the safeguard, of thy numerous camp
Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
Their painful hand to break the fallow glebe.
Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls ;
Nor on the mountain falls the stubborn oak
By their laborious axe. Their watchful eyes
Observe not how the flocks and heifers feed.
To them, of wealth, of all possessions, void,
The name of country with an empty sound
Flies o'er the ear, nor warms their joyless hearts,
Who share no country. Needy, yet in scorn
Rejecting labour ; wretched by their wants,
Yet profligate through indolence ; with limbs
Enervated and soft, with minds corrupt,
From misery, debauchery, and sloth ;
Are these to battle drawn against a foe
Train'd in gymnastic exercise and arms,
Inur'd to hardship, and the child of toil,
Wont through the freezing shower, the wintry storm,
O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad,
Or in the sun's impetuous heat to glow
Beneath the burden of his yellow sheaves ;
Whence on himself, on her whose faithful arms
Infold him joyful, on a growing race
Which glad his dwelling, plenty he bestows

With independence. When to battle call'd,
For them, his dearest comfort and his care,
And for the harvest promis'd to his toil,
He lifts the shield, nor shuns unequal force.
Such are the troops of every state in Greece.
One only yields a breed more warlike still,
Of whom selected bands appear in sight,
All citizens of Sparta. They the glebe
Have never turn'd, nor bound the golden sheaf.
They are devoted to severer tasks,
For war alone, their sole delight and care.
From infancy to manhood they are train'd
To winter-watches, to inclement skies,
To plunge through torrents, brave the tusky boar,
To arms and wounds; a discipline of pain
So fierce, so constant, that to them a camp,
With all its hardships, is a seat of rest,
And war itself remission from their toil.'

'Thy words are folly; (with redoubled scorn
Returns the monarch:) Doth not freedom dwell
Among the Spartans? Therefore will they shun
Superior foes. The unrestrain'd and free
Will fly from danger; while my vassals, born
To absolute controlment from their king,
Know, if the' allotted station they desert,
The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.'

To this the exile—'O conceive not, prince!
That Spartans want an object where to fix
Their eyes in reverence, in obedient dread.
To them more awful, than the name of king
To Asia's trembling millions, is the law;
Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes; to vanquish, or to die.'

Here Demaratus pauses. Xerxes halts.

Its long defile Thermopylæ presents.
The satraps leave their cars. On foot they form
A splendid orb around their lord. By chance
The Spartans then compos'd the' external guard.
They, in a martial exercise employ'd,
Heed not the monarch, or his gaudy train ;
But poise the spear, protended, as in fight ;
Or lift their adverse shields in single strife ;
Or, trooping, forward rush, retreat and wheel
In ranks unbroken, and with equal feet :
While others, calm, beneath their polish'd helms
Draw down their hair, whose length of sable curls
O'erspread their necks with terror. Xerxes here
The exile questions—' What do these intend,
Who with assiduous hands adjust their hair ?'

To whom the Spartan—' O imperial lord !
Such is their custom, to adorn their heads,
When full determin'd to encounter death.
Bring down thy nations in resplendent steel ;
Arm, if thou canst, the general race of man,
All who possess the regions unexplor'd
Beyond the Ganges, all whose wandering steps
Above the Caspiau range the Scythian wild,
With those who drink the secret fount of Nile ;
Yet to Laconian bosoms shall dismay
Remain a stranger.' Fervour from his lips
Thus breaks aloud ; when, gushing from his eyes,
Resistless grief o'erflows his cheeks. Aside
His head he turns. He weeps in copious streams.
The keen remembrance of his former state,
His dignity, his greatness, and the sight
Of those brave ranks, which thus unshaken stood,
And spread amazement through the world in arms,
Excite these sorrows. His impassion'd looks

Review the godlike warriors, who beneath
His standard once victorious fought; who call'd
Him once their king, their leader: then again,
O'ercharg'd with anguish, he bedews with tears
His reverend beard; in agony bemoans
His faded honours, his illustrious name,
Forgotten long; his majesty, defil'd
By exile, by dependence. So obscur'd
By sordid moss, and ivy's creeping leaf,
Some princely palace, or stupendous fane,
Magnificent in ruin, nods; where time
From under shelving architraves hath mow'd
The column down, and cleft the ponderous dome.

Not unobserv'd by Hyperanthes, mourn'd
The' unhappy Spartan. Kindly in his own
He press'd the exile's hand, and thus humane—

‘O Demaratus! in this grief I see
How just thy praises of Laconia's state.
Though cherish'd here with universal love,
Thou still deplor'st thy absence from her face,
Howe'er averse to thine. But swift relief
From indignation borrow. Call to mind
Thy injuries. The' auspicious fortune bless,
Which led thee far from calumny and fraud,
To peace, to honour, in the Persian court.’

As Demaratus, with a grateful mind,
His answer was preparing, Persia's king
Stern interrupted—‘Soon as morning shines,
Do you, Tigranes and Phraortes, head
The Medes and Cissiaus. Bring these Grecians
bound.’

This said, the monarch to his camp returns.
The' attendant princes reascend their cars,
Save Hiperanthes, by the Carian queen

Detain'd, who thus began—' Impartial, brave,
Nurs'd in a court, yet virtuous, let my heart
To thee its feelings undisguis'd reveal.
Thou hear'st thy royal brother. He demands
These Grecians bound. Why stops his mandate
there?

Why not command the mountains to remove,
Or sink to level plains. Yon Spartans view,
Their weighty arms, their countenance. To die
My gratitude instructs me in the cause
Of our imperial master. To succeed
Is not within the shadow of my hopes
At this dire pass. What evil genius sways?
'Tigranes, false Argestes, and the rest,
In name a council, ceaseless have oppos'd
My dictates, oft repeated in despite
Of purpled flatterers, to embark a force,
Which, pouring on Laconia, might confine
These sons of valour to their own defence.
Vain are my words. The royal ear admits
Their sound alone; while adulation's notes
In siren-sweetness penetrate his heart,
There lodge, ensnaring mischief.' In a sigh
To her the prince—' O faithful to thy lord,
Discreet adviser, and in action firm,
What can I answer? My afflicted soul
Must seek its refuge in a feeble hope.
Thou mayst be partial to thy Doric race,
Mayst magnify our danger. Let me hope,
Whate'er the danger; if extreme, believe
That Hyperanthes for his prince can bleed
Not with less zeal than Spartans for their laws.'

They separate. To Xerxes he repairs,
The queen, surrounded by the Carian guard,

Stays, and retraces with sagacious ken
The destin'd field of war, the varied space,
Its depth, its confines, both of hill and sea.
Meantime a scene more splendid hath allur'd
Her son's attention. His transported sight,
With ecstasy like worship, long pursues
The pomp of Xerxes in retreat, the throne,
Which show'd their idol to the nations round,
The bounding steeds, caparison'd in gold,
The plumes, the chariots, standards. He excites
Her care, express'd in these pathetic strains—

‘ Look on the king with gratitude. His sire
Protected thine. Himself upholds our state.
By loyalty inflexible repay
The obligation. To immortal powers
The adoration of thy soul confine;
And look undazzled on the pomp of man,
Most weak when highest. Then the jealous gods
Watch to supplant him. They his paths, his courts,
His chambers, fill with flattery's poisonous swarms,
Whose honey'd bane, by kingly pride devour'd,
Consumes the health of kingdoms.’ Here the boy,
By an attention which surpass'd his years,
Unlocks her inmost bosom : ‘ Thrice accurs'd
Be those, (the' indignant heroine pursues)
Those, who have tempted their imperial lord
To that preposterous arrogance, which cast
Chains in the deep to manacle the waves,
Chastis'd with stripes in heaven's offended sight
The Hellespont, and fondly now demands
The Spartans bound. O child, my soul's delight!
Train'd by my care to equitable sway,
And imitation of the gods, by deeds
To merit their protection, heed my voice.

They, who alone can tame or swell the floods,
Compose the winds, or guide their strong career,
O'erwhelming human greatness, will confound
Such vanity in mortals. On our fleet
Their indignation hath already fall'n.
Perhaps our boasted army is prepar'd
A prey for death, to vindicate their power.'

This said, a curious search in every part
Her eye renews. Adjoining to the straits,
Fresh bloom'd a thicket of entwining shrubs,
A seeming fence to some sequester'd ground,
By travellers unbeaten. Swift her guards
Address'd their spears to part the pliant boughs.
Held back, they yield a passage to the queen
And princely boy. Delicious to their sight,
Soft dales, meandering, show their flowery laps
Among rude piles of nature. In their sides
Of rock are mansions hewn; nor loaden trees
Of cluster'd fruit are wanting: but no sound,
Except of brooks in murmur, and the song
Of winged warblers, meets the listening ear.
No grazing herd, no flock, nor human form,
Is seen; no careful husband at his toil;
Beside her threshold no industrious wife,
No playful child. Instructive to her son
The princess then—'Already these abodes
Are desolate. Once happy in their homes,
The' inhabitants forsake them. Pleasing scene
Of nature's bounty, soon will savage Mars
Deform the lovely ringlets of thy shrubs,
And coarsely pluck thy violated fruits,
Unripe; will deafen, with his clangor fell,
Thy tuneful choirs. I mourn thy destin'd spoil,

Yet come thy first despoiler. Captains! plant,
Ere morning breaks, my secret standard here.
Come, boy, away. Thy safety will I trust
To Demaratus; while thy mother tries,
With these her martial followers, what sparks,
Left by our Doric fathers, yet inflame
Their sons and daughters in a stern debate
With other Dorians, who have never breath'd
The softening gales of Asia, never bow'd
In forc'd allegiance to Barbarian thrones.
Thou heed my order. Those ingenuous looks
Of discontent suppress. For thee this fight
Were too severe a lesson. Thou might'st bleed
Among the thousands fated to expire
By Sparta's lance. Let Artemisia die,
Ye all-disposing rulers! but protect
Her son.' She ceas'd. The lioness, who reigns
Queen of the forest, terrible in strength,
And prone to fury, thus, by nature taught,
Melts o'er her young in blandishment and love.

Now slowly tow'ards the Persian camp her steps
In silence she directed; when a voice,
Sent from a rock, accessible which seem'd
To none but feather'd passengers of air,
By this reproof detain'd her—'Caria's queen,
Art thou to Greece by Doric blood allied?
Com'st thou to lay her fruitful meadows waste,
Thou homager of tyrants?'—Upward gaz'd
The' astonish'd princess. Lo! a female shape,
Tall and majestic, from the' impendent ridge
Look'd awful down. A holy fillet bound
Her graceful hair, loose flowing. Seldom wept
Great Artemisia. Now a springing tear

Between her eyelids gleam'd. 'Too true, (she
sigh'd)

A homager of tyrants! Voice austere,
And presence half-divine!" Again the voice—

'O Artemisia! hide thy Doric sword.

Let no Barbarian tyrant through thy might,
Thy counsels, valiant as thou art and wise,
Consume the holy fanes, deface the tombs,
Subvert the laws of Greece, her sons inthrall.'

The queen made no reply. Her breastplate
heav'd.

The tremulous attire of covering mail
Confess'd her struggle. She at length exclaim'd—

'Olympian thunderer! from thy neighbouring hill,
Of sacred oaths remind me!' Then aside
She turns, to shun that majesty of form,
In solemn sounds upbraiding. Torn her thoughts
She feels. A painful conflict she endures,
With recollection of her Doric race;
Till gratitude, reviving, arms her breast.
Her royal benefactor she recalls,
Back to his sight precipitates her steps.

LEONIDAS.



BOOK V.

THE ARGUMENT.

Leonidas, rising by break of day, hears the intelligence which Agis and Melibœus bring from the upper pass; then commands a body of Arcadians, with the Plataeans and Thespians, to be drawn out for battle under the conduct of Demophilus in that part of Thermopylæ which lies close to the Phocian wall, from whence he harangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in single combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Phraortes. The Persians, entirely defeated, are pursued by Demophilus to the extremity of the pass. The Arcadians, inconsiderately advancing beyond it, fall into an ambush, which Artemisia had laid to cover the retreat of the Persians. She kills Clonius, but is herself repulsed by Demophilus. Diomedon and Dithyrambus give chase to her broken forces over the plains, in the sight of Persia's camp, whence she receives no assistance. She rallies a small body, and, facing the enemy, disables Dithyrambus by a blow on his helmet. This puts the Grecians into some confusion, and gives her an opportunity of preserving the remainder of her Carians by a timely retreat. She gains the camp, accuses Argestes of treachery; but, pacified by Demaratus, is accompanied by him with a thousand horse to collect the dead bodies of her soldiers for sepulture.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

AURORA dawn'd. Leonidas arose.
With Melibœus, Agis, now return'd,
Address'd the king—' Along the mountain's side
We bent our journey. On our way a voice,
Loud from a crag, on Melibœus call'd.
He look'd and answer'd: ' Mycon, ancient friend!
Far hast thou driven thy bearded train to-day;
But fortunate thy presence. None like thee,
Inhabitant of Cæta from thy birth,
Can furnish that intelligence which Greece
Wants for her safety.' Mycon show'd a track.
We mounted high. The summit, where we stopt,
Gave to the sight a prospect wide o'er hills,
O'er dales, and forests, rocks, and dashing floods
In cataracts. The object of our search
Beneath us lay, the secret path to Greece,
Where not five warriors in a rank can tread.
We thence descended to the Phocian camp,
Beset with scatter'd oaks, which rose and spread
In height and shade; on whose sustaining boughs
Were hung, in snowy folds, a thousand tents
Containing each a Phocian, heavy-mail'd,
With two light-weapon'd menials. Northward ends
The vale, contracted to that narrow strait

Which first we saw with Mycon.—‘ Prudent care
Like yours alleviates mine; (well-pleas’d the king
Replied :) Now, Agis, from Arcadia’s bands
Select a thousand spears. To them unite
The Thespians and Platæans. Draw their lines
Beneath the wall which fortifies the pass.
There, close-embodied, will their might repulse
The numerous foe. Demophilus salute.
Approv’d in martial service, him I name
The chief supreme.’ Obedient to his will,
The’ appointed warriors, issuing from the tents,
Fill their deep files, and watch the high command.
So round their monarch, in his stormy hall,
The winds assemble. From his dusky throne
His dreadful mandates Æolus proclaims
To swell the main, or heaven with clouds deform,
Or bend the forest from the mountain’s brow.
Laconia’s leader, from the rampart’s height,
To battle thus the listening host inflames—

‘ This day, O Grecians, countrymen, and friends !
Your wives, your offspring, your paternal seats,
Your parents, country, liberty, and laws,
Demand your swords. You, generous, active, brave,
Vers’d in the various discipline of Mars,
Are now to grapple with ignoble foes,
In war unskilful, nature’s basest dross,
And thence a monarch’s mercenary slaves.
Relax’d their limbs, their spirits are deprav’d
By eastern sloth and pleasures. Hire, their cause ;
Their only fruit of victory is spoil.
They know not freedom, nor its liberal cares.
Such is the flower of Asia’s host. The rest,
Who fill her boasted numbers, are a crowd
Forc’d from their homes; a populace, in peace

By jealous tyranny disarm'd, in war
Their tyrant's victims. Taught in passive grief
To bear the rapine, cruelty, and spurns,
Of Xerxes' mercenary band, they pine
In servitude to slaves. With terror sounds
The trumpet's clangor in their trembling ears.
Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance,
Their hands sustain, encumber'd, and present
The mockery of war.—But every eye
Shoots forth impatient flames. Your gallant breasts
Too long their swelling spirit have confin'd.
Go then, ye sons of liberty! go, sweep
These bondmen from the field. Resistless, rend
The glittering standard from their servile grasp.
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads,
The warrior's helm profaning. Think the shades
Of your forefathers lift their sacred brows,
Here to enjoy the glory of their sons.'

He spake. Loud pæans issue from the Greeks.
In fierce reply, Barbarian shouts ascend
From hostile nations, thronging down the pass.
Such is the roar of Ætna, when his mouth
Displodes combustion from his sulphurous depths,
To blast the smiles of nature. Dauntless stood,
In deep array before the Phocian wall
The phalanx, wedg'd with implicated shields,
And spears protended: like the graceful range
Of arduous elms, whose interwoven boughs
Before some rural palace wide expand
Their venerable umbrage, to retard
The North's impetuous wing. As o'er the main,
In lucid rows, the rising waves reflect
The sun's effulgence; so the Grecian helms

Return'd his light, which o'er their convex pour'd
A splendor, scatter'd through the dancing plumes.

Down rush the foes. Exulting, in their van
Their haughty leader shakes his threatening lance,
Provoking battle. Instant from his rank
Diomedon bursts, furious. On he strides;
Confronts Tigranes, whom he thus defies—

‘ Now art thou met, Barbarian! Wouldst thou
prove

Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command
Thy troops to halt, while thou and I engage.’

Tigranes, turning to the Persians, spake—
‘ My friends and soldiers, check your martial haste,
While my strong lance that Grecian's pride con-
founds.’

He ceas'd. In dreadful opposition soon
Each combatant advanc'd. Their sinewy hands
Grip'd fast their spears, high-brandish'd. Thrice
they drove,

With well-directed force, the' appointed steel
At either's throat, and thrice their wary shields
Repell'd the menac'd wound. The Asian chief
At length, with powers collected for the stroke,
His weapon rivets in the Grecian targe.

Aside Diomedon inclines, and shuns
Approaching fate; then all his martial skill
Undaunted summons. His forsaken spear
Beside him cast, his falchion he unsheaths:
The blade descending on Tigranes' arm,
That instant struggling to redeem his lance,
The nervous hand dissevers. Pale affright
Unmans the Persian; while his active foe
Full on his neck discharg'd the rapid sword,

Which open'd wide the purple gates of death.
Low sinks Tigranes in eternal shade.
His prostrate limbs the conqueror bestrides;
Then, in a tuft of blood-distilling hair
His hand entwining, from the mangled trunk
The head disjoins, and whirls with matchless strength
Among the adverse legions. All in dread
Recoil'd, where'er the ghastly visage flew
In sanguine circles, and pursued its track
Of horror through the air. Not more amaz'd,
A barbarous nation, whom the cheerful dawn
Of science ne'er illumin'd, view on high
A meteor, waving its portentous fires;
Where oft, as superstition vainly dreams,
Some demon sits amid the baneful blaze,
Dispersing plague and desolation round.
Awhile the stern Diomedon remain'd
Triumphant o'er the dire dismay, which froze
The heart of Persia; then, with haughty pace,
In sullen joy, among his gladsome friends
Resum'd his station. Still the hostile throng,
In consternation motionless, suspend
The charge. Their drooping hearts Phraortes
warms—

'Heav'n! can one leader's fate appal this host,
Which counts a train of princes for its chiefs?
Behold Phraortes. From Niphates' ridge
I draw my subject files. My hardy toil
Through pathless woods and deserts hath explor'd
The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd hand
Hath from the lion rent his shaggy hide.
So through this field of slaughter will I chase
Yon vaunting Greek.' His ardent words revive
Declining valour in the van. His lance

Then in the rear he brandishes. The crowd,
Before his threatening ire affrighted, roll
Their numbers headlong on the Grecian steel.
Thus, with his trident, ocean's angry god
From their vast bottom turns the mighty mass
Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach.

Tremendous frown'd the fierce Platæan chief;
Full in the battle's front. His ample shield,
Like a strong bulwark, prominent he rais'd
Before the line. There thunder'd all the storm
Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train
In emulating ardour charg'd the foe.
Where'er they turn'd the formidable spears,
Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon in blood,
Barbarian dead lay heap'd. Diomedon
Led on the slaughter. From his nodding crest
The sable plumes shook terror. Asia's host
Shrunk back, as blasted by the piercing beams
Of that unconquerable sword which fell
With lightening's swiftness on dissever'd helms,
And, menacing Tigranes' doom to all,
Their multitude dispers'd. The furious chief,
Encompass'd round by carnage, and besmear'd
With sanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends—

‘O Dithyrambus! let thy deeds this day
Surmount their wonted lustre. Thou in arms,
Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recall.
Behold, these slaves without resistance bleed.
Advance, my hoary friend. Propitious fate
Smiles on thy years. She grants thy aged hand
To pluck fresh laurels for thy honour'd brow.’

As, when endued with Promethean heat,
The molten clay respir'd, a sudden warmth
Glow in the venerable Thespian's veins;

In every sinew new-born vigour swells.
His falchion, thundering on Cherasmes' helm,
The forehead cleaves. Ecbatana to war
Sent forth Cherasmes. From her potent gates
He, proud in hope, her swarming numbers led.
Him Ariazus and Peucestes join'd,
His martial brothers. They attend his fate,
By Dithyrambus pierc'd. Their hoary sire
Shall o'er his solitary palace roam;
Lamenting loud his childless years, shall curse
Ambition's fury, and the lust of war;
Then, pining, bow in anguish to the grave.

Next, by the fierce Plataean's fatal sword,
Expir'd Damates, once the host and friend
Of fall'n Tigranes. By his side to fight,
He left his native bands. Of Syrian birth,
In Daphné he resided, near the grove
Whose hospitable laurels, in their shade,
Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, averse
To young Apollo. Hither she retir'd,
Far from her parent stream. Here fables feign,
Herself a laurel, chang'd her golden hair
To verdant leaves in this retreat; the grove
Of Daphné call'd, the seat of rural bliss,
Fann'd by the breath of zephyrs, and with rills
From bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boast,
The happy rival of Thessalia's vale;
Now hid for ever from Damates' eyes.

Demophilus, wise leader, soon improves
Advantage. All the veterans of his troop,
In age his equals, to condense the files,
To rivet close their bucklers, he commands.
As some broad vessel, heavy in her strength,
But well compacted, when a favouring gale

Invites the skilful master to expand
The sails at large, her slow but steady course
Impels through myriads of dividing waves;
So, unresisted, through Barbarian throngs
The hoary phalanx pass'd. Arcadia's sons
Pursued more swift. Gigantic Clonius press'd
The yielding Persians, who before him sunk,
Crush'd, like vile stubble underneath the steps
Of some glad peasant, visiting his fields
Of new-shorn harvest. On the general rout
Phraortes look'd intrepid still. He sprang
O'er hills of carnage to confront the foe :
His own inglorious friends he thus reproach'd—
 ' Fly then, ye cowards, and desert your chief.
Yet, single, here my target shall oppose
The shock of thousands.' Raging, he impels
His deathful point through Aristander's breast.
Him Dithyrambus lov'd: a sacred bard,
Rever'd for justice, for his verse renown'd;
He sung the deeds of heroes; those who fell,
Or those who conquer'd, in their country's cause;
The' enraptur'd soul inspiring with the love
Of glory, earn'd by virtue. His high strain
The Muses favour'd from their neighbouring bow'rs,
And bless'd with heavenly melody his lyre.
No more from Thespia shall his feet ascend
The shady steep of Helicon; no more
The stream divine of Aganippe's fount
Bedew his lip, harmonious; nor his hands,
Which, dying, grasp the unforsaken lance,
And prostrate buckler, ever more accord
His lofty numbers to the sounding shell.
Lo! Dythyrambus weeps! Amid the rage
Of war and conquest, swiftly-gushing tears

Find one sad moment's interval to fall
On his pale friend. But soon the victor proves
His stern revenge. Through shield and corselet
 plung'd,
His forceful blade divides the Persian's chest;
Whence issue streams of royal blood, deriv'd
From ancestors who sway'd in Ninus old
The' Assyrian sceptre. He to Xerxes' throne
A tributary satrap, rul'd the vales
Where Tigris swift, between the parted hills
Of tall Niphates, drew his foamy tide,
Impregnating the meads. Phraortes sinks,
Not instantly expiring. Still his eyes
Flash indignation, while the Persians fly.

Beyond the Malian entrance of the straits
The' Arcadians rush; when, unperceiv'd till felt,
Spring, from concealment in a thicket deep,
New swarms of warriors, clustering on the flank
Of these unwary Grecians. Tow'rd's the bay
They shrink: they totter on the fearful edge,
Which overhangs a precipice. Surpris'd,
The strength of Clonius fails. His giant bulk
Beneath the chieftain of the' assailing band
Falls prostrate. Thespians and Plateæans wave
Auxiliar ensigns. They encounter foes
Resembling Greeks in discipline and arms.
Dire is the shock. What less than Caria's queen,
In their career of victory, could check
Such warriors? Fierce she struggles; while the rout
Of Medes and Cissians carry to the camp
Contagious terror; thence no succour flows.
Demophilus stands firm; the Carian band
At length recoil before him. Keen pursuit
He leaves to others, like the' almighty sire

Who sits unshaken on his throne, while floods,
His instruments of wrath, o'erwhelm the earth,
And whirlwinds level on her hills the growth
Of proudest cedars. Through the yielding crowd,
Plataea's chief and Dithyrambus range,
Triumphant, side by side. Thus o'er the field
Where bright Alpheus heard the rattling car,
And concave hoof along his echoing banks,
Two generous coursers, link'd in mutual reins,
In speed, in ardour equal, beat the dust
To reach the glories of Olympia's goal.
The' intrepid heroes on the plain advance,
They press the Carian rear. Not long the queen
Endures that shame. Her people's dying groans
Transpierce her bosom. On their bleeding limbs
She looks maternal, feels maternal pangs.
A troop she rallies. Goddess-like, she turns,
Not less than Pallas with her Gorgon shield.
Whole ranks she covers, like the' imperial bird,
Extending o'er a nest of callow young
Her pinion broad, and pointing fierce her beak,
Her claws outstretch'd. The Thespian's ardent
hand,
From common lives refraining, hastes to snatch
More splendid laurels from that nobler head.
His ponderous falchion, swift descending, bears
Her buckler down; thence glancing, cuts the thong
Which holds her headpiece fast. That golden fence
Drops down. Thick tresses, unconfin'd, disclose
A female-warrior; one, whose summer pride
Of fleeting beauty had begun to fade,
Yet by the' heroic character supplied,
Which grew more awful, as the touch of time
Remov'd the softening graces. Back he steps,

Unman'd by wonder. With indignant eyes,
Fire-darting, she advances. Both her hands
Full on his crest discharge the furious blade.
The forceful blow compels him to recede
Yet further back, unwounded, though confus'd.
His soldiers flock around him. From a scene
Of blood more distant speeds Platæa's chief.
The fair occasion of suspended fight
She seizes, bright in glory wheels away,
And saves her Carian remnant. While his friend
In fervent sounds Diomedon bespake—

‘ If thou art slain, I curse this glorious day.
Be all thy trophies, be my own, acurs'd.’

The youth, recover'd, answers in a smile—
‘ I am unhurt. The weighty blow proclaim'd
The queen of Caria, or Bellona's arm.
Our longer stay Demophilus may blame.
Let us prevent his call.’ This said, their steps
They turn, both striding through empurpled heaps
Of arms, and mangled slain, themselves with gore
Distain'd; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd
A nightly mansion, on the desert rais'd
By some lone-wandering traveller, then, dy'd
In human crimson, through the forest deep
Back to their covert's dreary gloom retire.

Stern Artemisia, sweeping o'er the field,
Bursts into Asia's camp. A furious look
She casts around. Abrocomes remote
With Hyperanthes from the king were sent.
She sees Argestes in that quarter chief,
Who from battalions numberless had spar'd
Not one to succour, but his malice gorg'd
With her distress. Her anger now augments.
Revenge frowns gloomy on her darken'd brow.

He cautious moves to Xerxes, where he sat
High on his car. She follows. Lost her helm;
Resign'd to sportive winds her cluster'd locks,
Wild, but majestic, like the waving boughs
Of some proud elm, the glory of the grove,
And full in foliage. Her emblazon'd shield
With gore is tarnish'd. Pale around are seen,
All faint, all ghastly from repeated wounds,
Her bleeding soldiers. Brandishing her sword,
To them she points, to Xerxes thus she speaks—

‘ Behold these mangled Carians, who have spent
Their vital current in the king's defence,
Ev'n in his sight; while Medes and Cissians fled,
By these protected, whom Argestes saw
Pursued by slaughter to thy very camp,
Yet left unhelp'd to perish. Ruling sire!
Let Horomazes be thy name, or Jove,
To thee appealing, of the king I claim
A day for justice. Monarch, to my arm
Give him a prey. Let Artemisia's truth
Chastise his treason.’ With an eye submissive,
A mien obsequious, and a soothing tone,
To cheat the king, to moderate her ire,
Argestes utters these fallacious words—

‘ May Horomazes leave the fiend at large
To blast my earthly happiness, confine
Amid the horrors of his own abode
My ghost hereafter, if the sacred charge
Of Xerxes' person was not my restraint,
My sole restraint! To him our all is due;
Our all how trifling, with his safety weigh'd!
His preservation I prefer to fame,
And bright occasion for immortal deeds
Forego in duty. Else my helpful sword,

Fair heroine of Asia ! hadst thou seen
Among the foremost blazing. Lo ! the king
A royal present will on thee bestow,
Perfumes and precious unguents on the dead,
A golden wreath to each survivor brave.'

Aw'd by her spirit, by the flatterer's spell
Deluded, languid through dismay and shame
At his defeat, the monarch for a time
Sat mute, at length unlock'd his faltering lips—

'Thou hear'st, great princess ! Rest content :
his words

I ratify. Yet, farther, I proclaim
Thee of my train first counsellor and chief.'

'O eagle-ey'd discernment in the king !
O wisdom equal to his boundless power !
(The purple sycophant exclaims :—) Thou seest
Her matchless talents. Wanting her, thy fleet,
The floating bulwark of our hopes, laments ;
Foil'd in her absence, in her conduct safe.
Thy penetrating sight directs the field ;
There let her worth be hazarded no more.'

'Thy words are wise ; (the blinded prince rejoins :)
Return, brave Carian, to thy naval charge.'

Thus, to remove her from the royal ear,
Malicious guile prevails. Redoubled rage
Swells in her bosom. Demaratus sees,
And calms the storm, by rendering up his charge
To her maternal hand. Her son, belov'd,
Dispels the furies. Then the Spartan thus—

'O Artemisia ! of the king's command
Be thou observant. To thy slaughter'd friends
Immediate care, far other than revenge,
Is due. The ravens gather. From his nest
Among those cliffs, the eagle's rapid flight

Denotes his scent of carnage. *Thou*, a Greek,
Well know'st the duty sacred to the dead.
Depart; thy guide is piety. Collect,
For honourable sepulchres prepare,
Those bodies, mark'd with honourable wounds.
I will assist thee. Xerxes will intrust
To my command a chosen guard of horse.'

As oft, when storms in summer have o'ercast
The night with double darkness, only pierc'd
By heaven's blue fire, while thunder shakes the pole,
The orient sun, diffusing genial warmth,
Refines the troubled air; the blast is mute;
Death-pointed flames disperse; and placid Jove
Looks down in smiles: so prudence from the lips
Of Demaratus, by his tone, his mien,
His aspect strengthening smooth persuasion's flow,
Compos'd her spirit. She with him departs.
The king assigns a thousand horse to guard
The illustrious exile and heroic dame.

LEONIDAS.



BOOK VI.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Grecian commanders, after the pursuit, retire for refreshment to a cave in the side of Mount Ceta. Demophilus returns to the camp; Diomedon remains in the cave; while Dithyrambus, discovering a passage through it, ascends to the temple of the Muses. After a long discourse with Melissa, the daughter of Oileus, she intrusts him with a solemn message to Leonidas. Dithyrambus deutes this charge to Megistias, the augur. Leonidas, recalling the forces first engaged, sends down a fresh body. Diomedon and Dithyrambus are permitted, on their own request, to continue in the field with the Plataeans. By the advice of Diomedon, the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of twenty in depth, consisting of the Plataeans, Mantineans, Tegæans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phliasians, and Mycenæans. The Spartans compose a second line in a narrower part. Behind them are placed the light armed troops under Alpheus, and further back a phalanx of Locrians under Medon, the son of Oileus. Dieneces commands the whole.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

Now Dithyrambus and Plataea's chief,
Their former post attaining, had rejoin'd
Demophilus. Recumbent on his shield,
Phraortes, gasping there, attracts their sight.
To him in pity Thespia's gallant youth,
Approaching, thus his generous soul express'd—

‘Liv'st thou brave Persian? By propitious Jove!
From whom the pleasing stream of mercy flows
Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoic'd,
When fortune bless'd with victory my arm,
Than now to raise thee from this field of death.’

His languid eyes the dying prince unclos'd,
Then with expiring voice—‘Vain man, forbear
To proffer me what soon thyself must crave.
The day is quite extinguish'd in these orbs.
One moment fate allows me to disdain
Thy mercy, Grecian! Now I yield to death.’

‘This effort made, the haughty spirit fled.
So shoots a meteor's transitory gleam
Through nitrous folds of black nocturnal clouds,
Then dissipates for ever. O'er the corse
His reverend face Demophilus inclin'd,
Pois'd on his lance, and thus addressed the slain—

‘Alas! how glorious were that bleeding breast,
Had justice brac'd the buckler on thy arm,

And to preserve a people bade thee die!
Who now shall mourn thee? Thy ungrateful king
Will soon forget thy worth. Thy native land
May raise an empty monument, but feel
No public sorrow. Thy recorded name
Shall wake among thy countrymen no sighs
For their lost hero. What to them avail'd
Thy might, thy dauntless spirit? Not to guard
Their wives, their offspring, from the oppressor's
hand,

But to extend oppression, didst thou fall;
Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy soul,
Which but thy froward destiny forbade,
By freedom cherish'd, might have bless'd mankind.
All-bounteous Nature! thy impartial laws
To no selected race of men confine
The sense of glory, fortitude, and all
The nobler passions, which exalt the mind,
And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st
In every soil. But freedom, like the sun,
Must warm the generous seeds. By her alone
They bloom, they flourish; while oppression blasts
The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth,
False honour, savage valour, taint the soul,
And wild ambition: hence rapacious power
The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
A feast for dogs, the ensanguin'd field bestrew.'

He said. Around the venerable man
The warriors throng'd, attentive. Conquest hush'd
Its joyful transports. O'er the horrid field,
Rude scene so late of tumult, all was calm.
So, when the song of Thracian Orpheus drew
To Hebrus' margin, from their dreary seats,
The savage breed which Hæmus, wrapt in clouds,

Pangæus cold, and Rodopean snows,
In blood and discord nurs'd the soothing strain
Flow'd with enchantment through the ravish'd ear,
Their fierceness melted ; and, amaz'd, they learn'd
The sacred laws of justice, which the bard
Mix'd with the music of his heavenly string.

Meantime the' Arcadians, with inverted arms
And banners, sad and solemn, on their shields
The giant limbs of Clonius bore along,
To spread a general woe. The noble corse,
Dire spectacle of carnage ! passing by
To those last honours which the dead partake,
Struck Dithyrambus. Swift his melted eye
Review'd Phraortes on the rock supine ;
Then on the sage Demophilus he look'd
Intent, and spake—' My heart retains thy words.
This hour may witness how rapacious power
The earth unpeoples. Clonius is no more !
But he, by Greece lamented, will acquire
A signal tomb. This gallant Persian, crush'd
Beneath my fortune, bath'd in blood, still warm,
May lie forgotten by his thankless king ;
Yet not by me neglected shall remain
A naked corse.' The good old man replies—

' My generous child, deserving that success
Thy arm hath gain'd ? When vital breath is fled,
Our friends, our foes, are equal dust. Both claim
The funeral passage to that future seat
Of being, where no enmity revives.
There Greek and Persian will together quaff,
In amaranthine bowers, the cup of bliss
Immortal. Him thy valour slew on earth,
In that bless'd region thou mayst find a friend.'

This said, the ready Thespians he commands

To lift Phraortes from his bed of death,
The' empurpled rock. Outstretch'd, on targets
broad,

Sustain'd by hands late hostile, now humane,
He follows Clonius to the funeral pyre.

A cave not distant from the Phocian wall,
Through Ceta's cloven side, had Nature form'd,
In spacious windings. This in moss she clad ;
O'er half the entrance, downward from the roots,
She hung the shaggy trunks of branching firs,
To heaven's hot ray impervious. Near the mouth
Relucient laurels spread before the sun
A broad and vivid foliage. High above
The hill was darken'd by a solemn shade,
Diffus'd from ancient cedars. To this cave
Diomedon, Demophilus resort,
And Thespia's youth. A deep recess appears,
Cool as the azure grot where Thetis sleeps
Beneath the vaulted ocean. Whisper'd sounds
Of waters, trilling from the riven stone
To feed a fountain on the rocky floor,
In purest streams o'erflowing to the sea,
Allure the warriors, hot with toil and thirst,
To this retreat serene. Against the sides
Their disencumber'd hands repose their shields ;
The helms they loosen from their glowing cheeks ;
Propt on their spears, they rest: when Agis brings
From Lacedæmon's leader these commands—

' Leonidas recalls you from your toils,
Ye meritorious Grecians. You have reap'd
The first bright harvest on the field of fame.
Our eyes in wonder, from the Phocian wall,
On your unequal'd deeds incessant gaz'd.'

To whom Plataea's chief—' Go, Agis, say

To Lacedæmon's ruler that, untir'd,
Diomedon can yet exalt his spear,
Nor feels the armour heavy on his limbs.
Then shall I quit the contest? Ere he sinks,
Shall not this early sun again behold
The slaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance,
Should they adventure on a fresh assault?

To him the Thespian youth—' My friend, my
guide

To noble actions, since thy generous heart,
Intent on fame, disdains to rest, O grant
I too thy glorious labours may partake,
May learn once more to imitate thy deeds.
Thou, gentlest Agis, Sparta's king, entreat
Not to command us from the field of war.'

' Yes, persevering heroes, (he replied)
I will return, will Sparta's king entreat
Not to command you from the field of war.'

Then interpos'd Demophilus—' O friend,
Who leadst to conquest brave Plataea's sons;
Thou too, lov'd offspring of the dearest man,
Who dost restore a brother to my eyes;
My soul your magnanimity applauds :
But, O reflect that unabating toil
Subdues the mightiest! Valour will repine
When the weak hand obeys the heart no more.
Yet I declining through the weight of years,
Will not assign a measure to your strength.
If still you find your vigour undecay'd,
Stay, and augment your glory. So, when time
Casts from your whiten'd heads the helm aside,
When in the temples your enfeebled arms
Have hung their consecrated shields, the land
Which gave you life, in her defence employ'd,

Shall then by honours, doubled on your age,
Requite the generous labours of your prime.'

So spake the senior, and forsook the cave.
But from the fount Diomedon receives
The' o'erflowing waters in his concave helm,
Addressing thus the genius of the stream—

' Whoe'er thou art, divinity unstain'd
Of this fair fountain! till unsparing Mars
Heap'd carnage round thee, bounteous are thy
streams

To me, who ill repay thee. I again
Thy silver-gleaming current must pollute,
Which, mix'd with gore, shall tinge the Malian slime.'

He said, and lifted in his brimming casque
The bright refreshing moisture. Thus repairs
The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side,
Or eastern Indus, feasted on the blood
Of some torn deer, which nigh his cruel grasp
Had roam'd, unheeding, in the secret shade;
Rapacious o'er the humid brink he stoops,
And in the pure and fluid crystal cools
His reeking jaws. Meantime the Thespian's eye
Roves round the vaulted space; when sudden sounds
Of music, utter'd by melodious harps
And melting voices, distant, but in tones
By distance soften'd, while the echoes sigh'd
In lulling replication, fill the vault
With harmony. In admiration mute,
With nerves unbrac'd by rapture, he, entranc'd,
Stands like an eagle, when his parting plumes
The balm of sleep relaxes, and his wings
Fall from his languid side. Plataea's chief,
Observing, rous'd the warrior: ' Son of Mars!
Shall music's softness from thy bosom steal

The sense of glory? From his neighbouring camp
Perhaps the Persian sends fresh nations down.
Soon in bright steel Thermopylæ will blaze.
Awake! Accustom'd to the clang of arms,
Intent on vengeance for invaded Greece,
My ear, my spirit, in this hour admit
No new sensation, nor a change of thought.'

The Thespian, starting from oblivious sloth
Of ravishment and wonder, quick replied—

' These sounds were more than human. Hark !
Again !

O honour'd friend, no adverse banner streams
In sight. No shout proclaims the Persian freed
From his late terror. Deeper let us plunge
In this mysterious dwelling of the nymphs,
Whose voices charm its gloom.' In smiles rejoin'd
Diomedon—' I see thy soul intrall'd.
Me thou wouldst rank among the' unletter'd rout
Of yon Barbarians, should I press thy stay.
Time favours too. Till Agis be return'd,
We cannot act. Indulge thy eager search.
Here will I wait, a sentinel unmov'd,
To watch thy coming.' In exploring haste
The' impatient Thespian penetrates the cave.
He finds it bounded by a steep ascent
Of rugged steps; where, down the hollow rock,
A modulation clear, distinct, and slow,
In movement solemn, from a lyric string,
Dissolves the stagnant air to sweet accord
With these sonorous lays : ' Celestial maids !
While, from our cliffs contemplating the war,
We celebrate our heroes, O impart
Orphean magic to the pious strain !
That from the mountain we may call the groves ;

Swift motion through these marble fragments
breathe,

To overleap the high Cætæan ridge,
And crush the fell invaders of our peace.'

The animated hero upward springs,
Light as a kindled vapour, which, confin'd
In subterraneous cavities, at length
Pervading, rives the surface, to enlarge
The long imprison'd flame. Ascending soon,
He sees, he stands abash'd, then reverent kneels.

An aged temple, with insculptur'd forms
Of Jove's harmonious daughters, and a train
Of nine bright virgins, round their priestess rang'd,
Who stood in awful majesty, receive
His unexpected feet. The song is hush'd.
The measur'd movement on the lyric chord
In faint vibration dies. The priestess sage,
Whose elevated port and aspect rose
To more than mortal dignity, her lyre
Consigning graceful to attendant hands,
Looks with reproof. The loose, uncover'd hair
Shades his inclining forehead; while a flush
Of modest crimson dyes his youthful cheek.
Her pensive visage softens to a smile
On worth so blooming, which she thus accosts—

' I should reprove thee, inadvertent youth,
Who, through the sole access by nature left
To this pure mansion, with intruding steps
Dost interrupt our lays. But rise. Thy sword
Perhaps embellish'd that triumphant scene
Which wak'd these harps to celebrating notes.
What is the impress on thy warlike shield?'

' A golden eagle on my shield I bear,'
Still bending low, he answers. She pursues—

' Art thou possessor of that glorious orb,
By me distinguish'd in the late defeat
Of Asia, driven before thee? Speak thy name.
Who is thy sire? Where lies thy native seat?
Com'st thou for glory to this fatal spot,
Or from Barbarian violence to guard
A parent's age, a spouse, and tender babes,
Who call thee father?' Humbly he again—

' I am of Thespia, Dithyrambus nam'd,
The son of Harmatides. Snatch'd by fate,
He to his brother, and my second sire,
Demophilus, consign'd me. Thespia's sons
By him are led. His dictates I obey;
Him to resemble strive. No infant voice
Calls me a father. To the nuptial vow
I am a stranger, and among the Greeks
The least entitled to thy partial praise.'

' None more entitled, (interpos'd the dame)
Deserving hero! thy demeanor speaks,
It justifies the fame, so widely spread,
Of Harmatides' heir. O grace and pride
Of that fair city, which the Muses love,
Thee an accepted visitant I hail
In this their ancient temple! Thou shalt view
Their sacred haunts.' Descending from the dome,
She thus pursues—' First, know my youthful hours
Were exercis'd in knowledge. Homer's Muse
To daily meditation won my soul,
With my young spirit mix'd undying sparks
Of her own rapture. By a father sage
Conducted; cities, manners, men I saw,
Their institutes and customs. I return'd.
The voice of Locris call'd me to sustain
The holy function here. Now throw thy sight

Across that meadow, whose enliven'd blades
Wave in the breeze, and glisten in the sun
Behind the hoary fane. My bleating train
Are nourish'd there, a spot of plenty, spar'd
From this surrounding wilderness. Remark
That fluid mirror, edg'd by shrubs and flowers;
Shrubs of my culture, flowers by Iris dress'd.
Nor pass that smiling concave in the hill,
Whose pointed crags are soften'd to the sight
By figs and grapes.' She pauses, while around
His eye, delighted, roves; in more delight
Soon to the spot returning, where she stood
A deity in semblance, o'er the place
Presiding awful, as Minerva wise,
August like Juno, like Diana pure,
But not more pure than fair. The beauteous lake,
The pines wide-branching, falls of water clear,
The multifarious glow on Flora's lap,
Lose all attraction, as her gracious lips
Resume their tale—' In solitude remote
Here I have dwelt contemplative, serene.
Oft through the rocks, responsive to my lyre,
Oft to the' Amphictyons in assembly full,
When at this shrine their annual vows they pay,
In measur'd declamation I repeat
The praise of Greece, her liberty and laws.
From me the hinds, who tend their wandering goats
In these rude purlieus, modulate their pipes
To smoother cadence. Justice from my tongue
Disseñtions calms, which ev'en in deserts rend
The' unquiet heart of man. Now furious war
My careful thoughts engages, which delight
To help the free, the' oppressor to confound.
Thy feet auspicious fortune hither brings.

In thee a noble messenger I find.

Go, in these words Leonidas address—

‘Melissa, priestess of the tuneful nine,
By their behests invites thy honour’d feet
To her divine abode. Thee, first of Greeks,
To conference of high import she calls.’

The’ obedient Thespian down the holy cave
Returns. His swiftness suddenly prevents
His friend’s impatience, who salutes him thus—

‘Let thy adventure be hereafter told.
Look yonder. Fresh battalions from the camp
File through the Phocian barrier, to construct
Another phalanx, moving tower of war,
Which scorns the strength of Asia. Let us arm;
That, ready station’d in the glorious van,
We may secure permission from the king
There to continue, and renew the fight.’

That instant brings Megistias near the grot.
To Sparta’s phalanx his paternal hand
Was leading Menalippus. Not unheard
By Dithyrambus in their slow approach,
The father warns a young and liberal mind—

‘Sprung from a distant boundary of Greece,
A foreigner in Sparta, cherish’d there,
Instructed, honour’d, nor unworthy held
To fight for Lacedæmon in her line
Of discipline and valour, lo! my son,
The hour is come to prove thy generous heart;
That in thy hand, not ill-intrusted, shine
The spear and buckler, to maintain the cause
Of thy protectress. Let thy mind recall
Leonidas. On yonder bulwark plac’d,
He overlooks the battle; he discerns
The bold and fearful. May the gods I serve

Grant me to hear Leonidas approve
My son! No other boon my age implores.'

The augur paus'd. The animated cheek
Of Menalippus glows. His eager look
Demands the fight. This struck the tender sire,
Who then with moisten'd eyes—'Remember too
A father sees thy danger. Oh! my child,
To me thy honour, as to thee, is dear;
Yet court not death. By every filial tie,
By all my fondness, all my cares, I sue!
Amid the conflict, or the warm pursuit,
Still by the wise Dieneces abide.
His prudent valour knows the' unerring paths
Of glory. He admits thee to his side.
He will direct thy ardour. Go.' They part.

Megistias, turning, is accosted thus
By Dithyrambus—'Venerable seer,
So may that son, whose merit I esteem,
Whose precious head in peril I would die
To guard, return in triumph to thy breast,
As thou deliver'st to Laconia's king
A high and solemn message. While anew
The line is forming, from the' embattled field
I must not stray, uncall'd. A sacred charge
Through hallow'd lips will best approach the king.'
The Acarnanian in suspense remains
And silence. Dithyrambus quick relates
Melissa's words, describes the holy grot,
Then quits the' instructed augur, and attends
Diomedon's loud call. That fervid chief
Was-reassuming his distinguish'd arms,
Which, as a splendid recompense, he bore
From grateful Athens, for achievements bold,
When he with brave Miltiades redeem'd

Her domes from Asian flames. The sculptur'd helm
Enclos'd his manly temples. From on high
A four-fold plumage nodded ; while beneath
A golden dragon, with effulgent scales,
Itself the crest, shot terror. On his arm
He brac'd his buckler. Bordering on the rim,
Gorgonian serpents twin'd. Within, the form
Of Pallas, martial goddess, was emboss'd.
Low as her feet the graceful tunic flow'd.
Betwixt two griffins, on her helmet, sat
A sphynx, with wings expanded ; while the face
Of dire Medusa on her breastplate frown'd.
One hand supports a javelin, which confounds
The pride of kings. The other leads along
A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brow
A wreath encircles. Laurels she presents ;
But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,
In favour'd Athens ever now to rest.
This dread of Asia on his mighty arm
Diomedon uprear'd. He snatch'd his lance,
Then spake to Dithyrambus—' See, my friend,
Alone, of all the Grecians who sustain'd
The former onset, inexhausted stand
Plataea's sons. They well may keep the field,
Who with unslacken'd nerves endur'd that day
Which saw ten myriads of Barbarians driv'n
Back to their ships, and Athens left secure.
Charge in our line. Amid the foremost rank
Thy valour shall be plac'd, to share command,
And every honour with Plataea's chief.'

He said no more, but tow'rd's the Grecian van,
Impetuous, ardent, strode. Nor slow behind,
The pride of Thespia, Dithyrambus mov'd,
Like youthful Hermes in celestial arms ;

When lightly, graceful, with his feather'd feet,
Along Scamander's flowery verge he pass'd
To aid the' incens'd divinities of Greece
Against the Phrygian towers. Their eager haste
Soon brings the heroes to the' embattling ranks,
Whom thus the brave Diomedon exhorts—

‘ Not to contend, but vanquish, are ye come.
Here in the blood of fugitives, your spears
Shall, unoppos'd, be stain'd. My valiant friends,
But chief, ye men of Sparta, view that space,
Where from the Malian gulf more distant rise
The' Cætæan rocks, and less confine the straits.
There if we range, extending wide our front,
An ampler scope to havoc will be given.’

To him Dienece: ‘ Platæan friend,
Well dost thou counsel. On that widening ground,
Close to the mountain, place thy veteran files.
Proportion'd numbers from thy right shall stretch
Quite to the shore, in phalanx deep, like thine.
The Spartans, wedg'd in this contracted part,
Will I contain. Behind me Alpheus waits
With lighter bodies. Further back, the line
Of Locris forms a strong reserve.’ He said.
The different bands, confiding in his skill,
Move on successive. The Platæans first
Against the hill are station'd, In their van
Is Dithyrambus rank'd. Triumphant joy
Distends their bosoms, sparkles in their eyes.

‘ Bless'd be the great Diomedon, (they shout)
Who brings another hero to our line.
Hail, Dithyrambus ! Hail, illustrious youth !
Had tender age permitted, thou hadst gain'd
An early palm at Marathon.’ His post
He takes. His gladness blushes on his cheek

Amid the foremost rank. Around him crowd
The long-tried warriors. Their unnumber'd scars
Discovering, they in ample phrase recount
Their various dangers. He their wounds surveys
In veneration, nor disdains to hear
The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king
Return'd, the gracious Agis these address'd—

‘ Leonidas salutes Plataea's chief,
And Dithyrambus. To your swords he grants
A further effort with Plataea's band
If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I see
That all, unyielding, court the promis'd fight.
Hail, glorious veterans! This signal day
May your victorious arms augment the wreaths
Around your venerable heads, and grace
Thermopylae with Marathonian fame.’

This said, he hastens back. Meantime, advance
The Mantinean, Diophantus brave,
Then Hegesander, Tegeas dauntless chief,
Who near Diomedon, in equal range,
Erect their standards. Next the Thebans form.
Alcmaeon, bold Eupalamus, succeed,
With their Corinthian and Phliasian bands.
Last, on the Malian shore, Mycenae's youth
Aristobulus draws. From Ceta's side
Down to the bay, in well-connected length,
Each gleaming rank contains a hundred spears,
While twenty bucklers every file condense.
A sure support, Dieneces behind
Arrays the Spartans. Godlike Agis here,
There Menalippus, by their leader stand,
Two bulwarks. Breathing ardour in the rear,
The words of Alpheus fan the growing flame
Of expectation through his light-arm'd force ;

While Polydorus, present in his thoughts,
To vengeance sharpens his indignant soul.

No foe is seen. No distant shout is heard.
This pause of action Dithyrambus chose.
The solemn scene on Cæta to his friend
He open'd large ; portray'd Melissa's form,
Reveal'd her mandate ; when Plataea's chief—

‘ Such elevation of a female mind
Bespeaks Melissa worthy to obtain
The conference she asks. This wondrous dame,
Amid her hymns, conceives some lofty thought
To make these slaves, who loiter in their camp,
Dread ev'n our women. But, my gentle friend,
Say, Dithyrambus, whom the liquid spell
Of song enchants, should I reproach the gods,
Who form'd me cold to music's pleasing pow'r?
Or should I thank them, that the softening charm
Of sound or numbers ne'er dissolv'd my soul?
Yet I confess thy valour breaks that charm,
Which may enrapture, not unman, thy breast.’
To whom his friend—‘ Doth he, whose lays record
The woes of Priam, and the Grecian fame,
Doth he dissolve thy spirit? Yet he flows
In all the sweetness harmony can breathe.’

‘ No, by the gods ! (Diomedon rejoins)
I feel that mighty muse. I see the car
Of fierce Achilles, see the' encumber'd wheels
O'er heroes driven, and clotted with their gore.
Another too demands my soul's esteem,
Brave Æschylus of Athens. I have seen
His muse begirt by furies, while she swell'd
Her tragic numbers. Him, in equal rage
His country's foes o'erwhelming, I beheld
At Marathon. If Phœbus would diffuse

Such fire through every bard, the tuneful band
Might in themselves find heroes for their songs.
But, son of Harmatides, lift thine eye
To yonder point, remotest in the bay.
Those seeming clouds, which o'er the billows fleet
Successive round the jutting land, are sails.
The' Athenian pendant hastens to salute
Leonidas. O Æschylus! my friend,
First in the train of Phœbus and of Mars,
Be thou on board. Swift bounding o'er the waves,
Come, and be witness to heroic deeds!
Brace thy strong harp with loftier-sounding chords,
To celebrate this battle! Fall who may:
But, if they fall with honour, let their names
Round festive goblets in thy numbers ring,
And joy, not grief, accompany the song.'
Conversing thus, their courage they beguil'd,
Which else, impatient of inactive hours,
At long-suspended glory had repin'd.

END OF VOL. I.

